THE

MISERIES OF MARRIAGE;

OR,

THE FAIR OF MAY FAIR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Mothers and Daughters," "Pin Money," &c. &c.

CONTAINING

THE SEPARATE MAINTENANCE,
THE DIVORCÉE,
THE FLIRT OF TEN SEASONS, &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

SEPARATE MAINTENANCE.

Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

RITUAL OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

It is observed of over-cautious generals, that they never engage in battle without securing a retreat; on the other hand, the greatest conquerors have burnt their ships or broke down the bridges behind them, determined to succeed or die in the engagement. In the same manner, I should very much suspect a woman who takes such precautions for her retreat, and contrives methods to live happily without the affection of one to whom she joins herself for life.—ADDISON.

IT was a bright sunshiny day that beamed upon the solemnization of Henrietta Broughton's wedding. Her life had been *all* sunshine! She was one of those happy beings which nature sometimes creates in her holiday moods; blest with good looks, good health, and a tolerably good understanding.

But like the Fairy Princess, said to be endowed by an evil genius at her birth, with some malignant quality rendering negative all the good gifts previously bestowed, Henrietta was deprived by circumstances of the happy results to be anticipated from so rare a combination of merits. We are all aware, that in this world, (according to our terse English translation of the French proverb, "*Tout est heur ou malheur,*") "Luck's all!" and it was Henrietta's *luck* to lose her parents in her infancy, and to be placed under the care and guardianship of her mother's widowed sister; by whom all her faults were transformed into virtues,—her virtues suffered to dwindle into feeble enervation of mind. The prosperities of life fanned the fair orphan with their golden wings from her very cradle; and with so incapable a monitress as Lady Mandeville to counteract their evil influence, it was only wonderful that as she advanced in life her mind grew no softer, her heart no harder. A disposition naturally generous and cordial counter-

acted the indurative power of the great world—the petrifying spring whose showers incessantly besprinkle the path of fashion!

Nor did the propitious genius which presided over Miss Broughton's destinies, desert her on the threshold of the gorgeous temple of pleasure into which, under the auspices of Lady Mandeville, she was initiated in all the inexperience of seventeen,—all the bewilderment of a novice accustomed from her childhood to the incense of weak partiality. It would be difficult, indeed, to ascertain in what year of her babyhood, Lady Mandeville first began to utter in her hearing the most exaggerated panegyrics of her wit and beauty, and the most sanguine predictions concerning her future establishment in life. The nurses promised her she should be a duchess, that she might be persuaded to allow them to clasp on her red morocco shoes;—and there was no surer bribe by which the young lady could be induced to study her alphabet and apostrophize that "busy bee" which Dr. Watts has rendered so edifying an insect to many a rising (or falling) generation,—than to assure her she should marry a lord, and ride in that summum bonum of story-book happiness—a coach and six.

From infancy to girlhood, (the age when Dr. Watt's bee was displaced by Mr. T. H. Bayley's butterfly,) Henrietta experienced the serious misfortune of having all things her own way,—all persons at her own disposal. Miss Broughton was not to be contradicted; Miss Broughton was not to be punished; Miss Broughton was not to be made uncomfortable. The consequence was, that she rendered every one else so. Nursery maids, governesses, masters, found it useless to expect subordination or proficiency from a person thus wondrously elevated above the common accidents of humanity; and had not the spoiled child been so pre-eminently pretty, and naturally of a kindly, affectionate disposition, she would have become as hateful to all around her, as she was adorable to the silly aunt who beheld in her all that remained of a beloved sister.

Even in society,—that stream whose unsparing friction so soon reduces the angles of every resisting fragment of rock, and rounds it to a pebble,—Henrietta

was destined to a far less severe schooling than usually attends the heirs and heiresses of clay;—and precisely because she *was* an heiress. A lovely girl with sixty thousand pounds is very unlikely to be severely handled, unless when her absence renders the lesson profitless. While she was away, many rival beauties decided her to be affected; one or two discarded suitors declared her to be peevish and selfish; the elderly spinsters frequenting her aunt's card table, whispered that she was very *high;* and certain of the female companions of her youth, on whom she had turned her back in all the delirium of her new jewels, her presentation, and debût at Almack's, pronounced her to be very *cold:*—but none of these strictures were made audible, none of these disapprobations visible to Henrietta. Her smile, when it *did* make its appearance, was so sweet, that those around her forgot, in the delight of hailing the tardy dawn, how long it had been withheld; her voice was so soothing, her demeanour, when she chose, so ingratiating, that every one was pleased with *her* whom it pleased her to conciliate.

From this excess of good and evil fortune, it naturally ensued that Miss Broughton became occasionally fractious, and always fanciful. Every day she grew a more decided angel in Lady Mandeville's estimation. The poor foolish woman could do nothing but quote the list of Henrietta's conquests, and deplore the difficulty she would experience in deciding among such a congregation of suitors.

Who,—after all,—was worthy of Henrietta? So very pretty a girl could have afforded to be portionless—so very rich a one to be less delicately lovely. She had every thing to render her a desirable connexion; but where was she to find a prospect sufficiently alluring, or the promise of a life of unalloyed and unalloyable happiness, to induce her to resign a home where she was worshipped,—a liberty which fortune enabled her to embellish with so many fortuitous attractions? Miss Broughton danced at all the balls of the season, smiled and chatted at all its pic-nics, gazed unmoved at the *elite* of the army and navy list, the *roues* of Crockford's, the *ennuyes* of the travellers. It would not do;—not one of them was worth a sigh!—She quitted Paris at

the close of the carnival, leaving two marquesses and a colonel of hussars to be dragged for in the *Canal de l'Ourcq;* and left London for Tunbridge at the end of the season, having expended divers quires of satin paper, in expressing her regret that it was out of her power to return the flattering preference of Sir Thomas R., Captain B., &c. &c. &c. Poor Henrietta began to sigh over her own prospects; she was very much afraid she should never be able to fall in love!—But her apprehensions were premature.

Tunbridge Wells, be it known to the untravelled reader, is a spot where visiters of the masculine sex are accounted rare and valuable acquisitions. It is essentially a tea-drinking, gossiping, carpet-working place, extremely obnoxious to that wayward moiety of the creation which insists on being amused; and whenever a solitary man drops from the skies upon its furzy, breezy, browsy heath, he is observed to smile for a whole day, yawn through the second, and disappear on the third. Charming as the place is held by that simple sex which can content itself with a vegetative, indolent mode of happiness, it must be acknowledged to be wholly unacceptable to the sin-loving and sorrow-working portion of mankind.

Yet it was at Tunbridge that Henrietta Broughton, literally and figuratively speaking, met with her match. At church one Sunday, and on the Pantiles one Monday, she chanced to encounter one of the handsomest faces, united with one of the most distinguished figures, she had ever beheld; and whereas the solemn occasion of his first appearance prevented the stranger from exhibiting the established Tunbridge smile, he neither yawned on the Monday nor disappeared on the Tuesday; nay! even another Sunday and another saw him still wandering among the green shades of Mount Ephraim, or sauntering on his brown mare towards the woods of Summer Hill.—It was plain that the mysterious solitary found some peculiar charm in the place; that he was either wooing the Muse, the Egeria of the Chalybeate Springs, or some other nymph of the river Ton.

A very slight inquiry sufficed to unravel the mystery. At Lady Mandeville's next tea-party, it afforded con-

siderable delight to the maiden coterie of the place to be called on to explain that the proprietor of the handsome face and distinguished figure, who had not yet arrived at the yawning epoch of his residence at Tunbridge, was a certain Sir Henry Wellwood; that he was on a visit to an invalid sister; and was supposed to be attached, or engaged (or sticking at some other of the preliminary steps of being married) to a Miss Rodney, "a very beautiful Miss Rodney, also resident with Mrs. Delafield."

Here was—

Food for meditation, e'en to madness,

for Henrietta Broughton. The only man who had ever so far encroached upon her personal interest as to excite her curiosity, was already pledged to another!—She became inquisitive concerning the lady; followed the veiled Isis into a music shop on the Pantiles; and even put her horse to a canter one hot day in July to catch a glimpse of Miss Rodney's face, as she rode with her veil thrown back, side by side with her lover, along the Eridge road. But that single glance sufficed to assure Miss Broughton that Mrs. Delafield's friend must be one of the most piquante or most meritorious women in the world; since, according to La Bruyere, "When an *ugly* woman produces a tender passion, it must be in proportion to some quality she possesses superior to that of beauty."—It was plain, therefore, that Miss Rodney was either a Mrs. Montagu or a Hannah More; for she had red hair and was slightly pitted with the small-pox:—a female whose face is usually covered with a veil, may indeed be safely predicted as either inordinately ugly or miraculously handsome. Henrietta was satisfied that Sir Henry Wellwood must have found all the beauties of his sick sister's visiter in her mind.

But even this discovery was far from consolatory to Henrietta. It mattered little how unattractive the object of Sir Henry's engagement, it precluded him from the possibility of adding his name to the list of her own adorers. Again and again she met him, and as often decided that since the days of Theseus of the Phidian Torso, no "mortal mixture of earth's mould" (or mar-

ble) had ever been so handsome; nor, since those of George the Prince, none ever half so graceful. He looked intelligent—he seemed courteous;—Miss Pinchet and Miss Winchet, Mrs. Drone and Mrs. Crone, occasionally alluded at Lady Mandeville's cassinotable to the superior elegance of his manners, the peculiar amiability of his disposition, and the charm by which his presence enhanced the tea and toast of poor dear Mrs. Delafield. In short, the man was a paragon,—as complete a paragon as Henrietta's self; but, alas! his merits were rendered as negative to her by the claims of that inexpressibly odious Miss Rodney, as if he had been Grand Master of the Knights of Malta.

Wondrous are the coincidences of human destiny!—Had Miss Broughton's introduction to Sir Henry Wellwood chanced amid the glare of a London ball-room, it is highly probable that she might have noticed nothing striking in his appearance, except that he was rather grave for his age, and danced abominably; nay! even if at the close of the season Lady Mandeville had betaken herself to Cowes instead of the humdrum latitudes of Tunbridge, and launched her lovely niece among the fashionable yachts and yachters, Henrietta might have looked upon him, among the multitude of Lord Roberts and Lord Harries, as a man of very secondary importance. It was only at dandyless Tunbridge, and about to be married without having been warned by preternatural suggestions of the existence of a Miss Henrietta Broughton, that she fancied him into an idol. And when, at the expiration of a fortnight, providence and a light calash brought down to Mount Sion a pretty lively little Mrs. Etherington (who had become a widow so early that she scarcely remembered having been a wife,)—a half-sister of Mr. Delafield, and half and half friend of Lady Mandeville's, who soon managed to gossip, push, and carry on an acquaintance between the two families,—Henrietta was as ready to be fallen in love with as it was possible to conceive. She looked in the glass, and remembered Miss Rodney's tawny locks; till she trembled either for Sir Henry's steadiness of purpose, or the accomplishment of her own projects.

CHAPTER II.

To ask the reason why thou art in love,
Or what might be the noblest aim in love,
Would overthrow that kindly rising warmth
That many times slides gently o'er the heart.

BEAUMONT.

"WELL, Hatty, my dear, what have you to amuse yourself in this dullest of dull places?" cried the fair widow, extending her hand to Miss Broughton, who had panted across the heath one morning to pay her a visit, in the vain hope of meeting Sir Henry.

"I do not find it dull. We have charming walks, and the air on the heath is the purest in England," replied Henrietta, repeating the established phrase of the Pinchets and Winchets, the Crones and the Drones; and illustrating the assertion by exhibiting her soft blue eyes scorched into an inflammation.

"The heath?—nonsense!—Good only for donkeys and nursery maids!—Do you suppose *I* came here to stroll about on the heath, or take the dust in a fly, like my estimable friend Lady Mandeville?"

Miss Broughton accepted the hint to say something that intended to be civil, about the cause being unimportant since the effect was so desirable; but she did not make the case out very clearly.

"Well, never mind all that," cried the giddy Mrs. Etherington, who was too wholesale a dealer in phrases herself not to mistrust them when uttered by other people. "I take it for granted you are very glad to see me. But tell me what you intend to do to amuse me?"

"I concluded you came here to amuse yourself," said Henrietta, somewhat piqued; "and was rather surprised that a person able to command a tour to Spa, Pyrmont,

Carlsbad, Doncaster, or the Highlands, should think of braving the old Tunbridge routine of 'a party' to the High Rocks, Hever, Penshurst, Knowle, and all the other dead lions of the neighbourhood."

"Spa, or Doncaster!" reiterated the coquette. "Greenwich or Highgate!—What have *I* to do with the Pouhon or the Leger? My dear child, you have been roaming yonder among the flocks of geese to some purpose. Don't you remember, Hatty, my telling you a long history one day last season, as we were walking in Kensington Gardens, about a man who had just inherited ten thousand a-year?"

"Whom you had refused, when a younger brother, last winter, at Paris?—Perfectly!"

"No, my dear, not *refused!*—It never came to a positive, *bona fide* proposal. We flirted together most unmercifully; and nothing prevented my falling as much in love as I believed the hero of my romance to have done, but the difficulty one experiences in facing the horrors of starvation, when called on to decide the matter between dinner and dinner such as one eats in the Chaussée d'Antin. I really believe it was the flavour of a Charlotte Russe which proved to me the impossibility of marrying Captain Wellwood, and living on half a crown a-year!"

"Mrs. Delafield's brother?" cried Henrietta, starting from the listless attitude in which she had been giving audience to these uninteresting details of her friend's affairs.

"Precisely!—'Sir Henry Wellwood, of Wellwood Abbey, in the county of Stafford,' as our friend, pompous old Pinchet, would call him; Harry Wellwood, the sighing, sentimental cavalier of the Bois de Boulogne, as I am myself inclined to define him; and Sir Henry, the humble adorer of Helena Etherington, as I am very positively bent on making him. I know my man, Hatty; and I promise you wedding-cake before Lord Mayor's day."

"I am afraid you will disappoint both yourself and me," observed Miss Broughton, with a slight curl of the lip. "Sir Henry is engaged to be married to Miss Rodney."

"*Oh, par example!*"—cried Mrs. Etherington, burst-

ing into a fit of laughter; "these feline coteries of the Wells, are, without exception, the most miscomprehending and misrepresenting set!—Arabella Rodney happens to be a natural sister of Wellwood and Mrs. Delafield; and most affectionately beloved by both. I knew they were anxious the circumstance of her birth should not transpire in a temple of Echo such as this; but I had no suspicion that so strange a misconception could arise."

"His natural sister!"—reiterated Henrietta, with throbbing temples; "how very strange! how stupid we have all been—how"——

"Good morning, Mrs. Etherington," said Sir Henry, entering the room, or rather leaning over the drawing-room window, opening to the grass-plot which the proprietor of Bellevue Villa always called a lawn in his Delvic advertisements. "I am come on an embassy from my sister, who insists on attempting to catch cold by drinking tea at the High Rocks this evening. Will you be of the party?"

"Oh! pray let us go and catch cold!" cried the coquette; "any acquisition is desirable in this uneventful place. But where is your gallantry, that you do not invite my little friend to be of the party?" she added, affecting a patronising tone towards Henrietta, which caused the colour to rise in the cheeks of the heiress.

"I am happy to say my interference is needless," said he, bowing very respectfully towards the younger and fairer of the two ladies; "since Lady Mandeville has already induced us to hope that if *you* undertake the care of Miss Broughton, she will grant us the favour of her company."

Mrs. Etherington bit her lips. A suspicion crossed her mind, that perhaps she was only invited to play the chaperon to Lady Mandeville's niece. She half resolved to be sulky and refuse; but that would not prevent Sir Henry from being there. "If the evening should be fine, perhaps I *may* drive that way," said she, at last; and Wellwood was obliged to return to his sister, and Henrietta to her aunt, in all the anxiety of this inconclusive answer.

The evening *did*, however, prove fine: as heavy a dew rose from the hop-gardens as Mrs. Delafield's delicate

lungs could desire; and, at seven in the evening, Miss Broughton found herself seated in Mrs. Etherington's pony-carriage, looking pretty, conscious, and agitated; thinking a great deal about Miss Rodney; and a great deal more about her half brother. It is probable that the thoughts of her companion were taking pretty nearly the same direction; for she was equally absent, and less flighty than usual; and, though attired in a most victorious pink bonnet and feathers, could not help glancing enviously towards the deep blue eyes which seemed to borrow an intenser hue from Henrietta's simple muslin dress and white capote. Every age has its improvements. The march of intellect had already taught Miss Broughton, who came into this learned world six years later than her friend, that the attention of the male sex is not to be attracted by finery. She would not have arrayed her pretty face in Mrs. Etherington's pink bonnet and feathers for the world.

Either under the influence of the reverie which had affected her ever since Sir Henry Wellwood's bow over the window-sill in the morning, or perhaps bewildered in her topographical knowledge by the provoking triumph of Henrietta's quaker-like simplicity, Mrs. Etherington chose to instruct her duodecimo postillion in a cross-road to the Rocks; which would enable her to leave a note at some house, some villa,—the whereabout of which seemed equally problematical to the lady of the white capote and the lady of the pink bonnet—the post-boy and the pony. At length, after much perplexity, a vast deal of turning and returning, a few shrieks, a few precipices, and more than one proposal of returning home, the villa was *made* by the voyagers,—the note deposited;—and with a miraculous complication of instructions, from a pudding-eating Sussex footman, about "going right on, and turning right anent, and keeping the hay-stack afore 'em, and leaving the wood to the lee," they set off towards the Rocks.

The evening was too beautiful, and the last notes of the blackbirds in the dingles on either side the road too melodious, to admit of being out of humour; while Mrs. Etherington pointed out to Henrietta the extreme picturesqueness of the little valley whose bank they were skirting, and which lay so precipitously and so far be-

low the road, that they could scarcely distinguish the various tints of the profusion of water-flowers rising from the brook that threaded its green meadows. Poor souls! they little anticipated how soon their botanical judgment on the subject was likely to be amended.

But why affect the mystery of romance in so familiar an incident? The postillion, who had maintained a brisk trot while obeying the letter of his instructions of "keeping the haystack afore 'em," thought proper to tickle his spirited ponies to the same pace, when on the point of "leaving the wood to the lee;" and having turned a sharp angle into a by-lane (a regular Tunbridge lane, consisting of a single gravelly rut bordered by hedge-rows,) half a minute's full gallop conveyed the little chaise down a hill-side a couple of hundred yards in very nearly perpendicular descent. The effort was considerable,—for it sufficed to leave ponies, chaise, postillion, and ladies, breathless at the bottom;—the chaise and Mrs. Etherington quite insensible,—the ponies and boy considerably fractured,—and poor Henrietta panting with consternation!—After a few moments of dismay, she took courage to limp on towards the Rocks; and on the road thither was overtaken by Sir Henry Wellwood, in a solitary fly, conveying the provisions for the pic-nic. Was it fright, or the pain of her wounded ankles which made her grow so faint when he approached!—Was it compassion or love which made him turn so pale at the spectacle?

It does not signify!—No person could be blind to the fact that Henrietta's bruises excited far more sympathy in his bosom than Helena's broken arm; and when the latter was finally emancipated from the sick-room to which she was many weeks confined by so serious an accident, she had the satisfaction of learning from her friend Mrs. Delafield, not only the circumstantial evidence of the shock *she* had experienced on hearing of the accident,—that she "never had such a turn in her life—actually shook and trembled for a week afterwards, and that her nerves were worn to a cambric thread; but that the courtship had been proceeding between poor dear Harry and that charming creature poor dear Miss Broughton, with unabated ardour; and that

poor dear Lady Mandeville and herself had very little doubt the wedding would take place within a month."

"Poor dear" Mrs. Delafield, who was a valetudinarian by right divine (a seven months' child reared by the skill of the apothecary,) had so long been in the habit of pitying herself, that she had contracted one of bestowing her unsolicited compassion on the whole human race. She "poor deared" the very lovers themselves in the height of their raptures; and yet, with instinctive wrong-headedness, passed over the mortification of the pretty little widow, who was certainly the "poor dearest" of the whole party; particularly when she found that long before Lord Mayor's day, wedding-cake was in progress for the nuptials of "Sir Henry Wellwood, of Wellwood Abbey, in the county of Stafford, with Henrietta, only daughter of the late John Conybeare Atterfield Broughton, Esq., M. P."

CHAPTER III.

Oh! trustless state of miserable men,
That build your bliss on hope of earthly things,
And vainly think yourselves most happy then,
When painted faces with smooth flattering
Do fawn on you! SPENSER.

In bold defiance of the charge of tautology, we commence this chapter in the very words of our first: "It was a bright, sunshiny morning, that beamed on the ceremonial of Henrietta Broughton's wedding;" and though the season was far from propitious to the details of elegant display,—though at that brick-laying and white-washing period of the year not a bishop was to be had for love or fashion,—though forced to content herself with bridesmaids of less than patrician dignity, and to step into her travelling-chariot in Maddox Street, among a herd of plasterer's boys in paper caps, with only four carriages and two cabriolets to crowd

the narrow way,—Lady Wellwood's anxious vanity was almost satisfied!—She had observed Mrs. Etherington, who insisted on an invitation to the solemnity by way of proving that she was not piqued, (and the sleeve of whose Parisian pelisse was still tied up, with the arm gracefully disposed in a sling,) stop short in her flirtation with Lord Sandys, the bridesman, to admire the beauty of her Brussels veil; while her vain, silly aunt, half-whimpering, half-joyous, whispered, as she approached the altar, that all the Wellwood family were of opinion she looked like an angel. In short, the wedding was a very proper wedding; plenty of white satin and orange-blossom, plenty of hysterics and aromatic vinegar; and a charming dead faint in the vestry from poor dear Lady Mandeville, when the bride was torn from her arms. The Dean was obliged to fan her in the passage with his shovel hat.

There was one person present, however, at this moving scene, who neither wept nor fainted—neither flirted with the bridesman, nor moralized with the Dean; had no recourse to a salts-bottle, nor the least anxiety concerning the texture of Miss Broughton's Brussels point; and yet experienced a far deeper interest in the proceedings of the morning than any of those who seemed to fancy that mutes should have been stationed at the vestry door, and hat-bands distributed to the afflicted company:—this was Arabella Rodney.

Of all the world she was, perhaps, the most attached to her brother Wellwood. Peculiarly sensitive to the humiliation of her birth, and proportionably grateful for the pains taken by Sir Henry to make her forget the single shade by which she was less fortunate than himself and his sister Delafield, she had learned to regard him with a tenderness and veneration amounting almost to idolatry. She had long been of opinion that he was the most perfect creature on earth, and therefore deserved to be the happiest; nor had she been able to think with less than the most eager anxiety on the perils and dangers of his choice of a wife, ever since his accession to title and estates placed him in the way of being wooed by the ladies. People may talk of the bolts of Cupid; but those who have the misfortune to claim the distinction of being called a good match, are

well aware that Hymen is by far the most cunning archer of the two.

It was Miss Rodney's penetration of mind which detected the real nature of Mrs. Etherington's projects, and exposed them to her brother;—it was Miss Rodney who found out the schemes of the Pinchets and the Winchets to marry him to an indigent cousin;—it was Miss Rodney who discerned the partiality entertained for Sir Henry by Lady Mandeville's niece; and above all, it was Miss Rodney, and Miss Rodney alone, who had courage to forewarn him that the pretty, witty, fascinating heiress, was a spoiled child, and would, probably, become a wilful wife. She did not interfere,—she did not advise; but, sooth to say, she did most earnestly implore Sir Henry to take the case duly into consideration before he ventured to plunge into the boiling, eddying, roaring, menacing Charybdis of matrimony!—Of course, he gave ear to her prayer, and complied with her request:—brothers always do on such occasions! No! it was less of a surprise than an affliction to her to learn from Wellwood, on the following morning, that he had proposed for the beautiful Henrietta, and that a day was already fixed for their union. All farther expostulation being unavailing and *unwise*, nothing was left for her but to love and make herself loved by the bride as warmly as she could, that she might, at least, attempt, to counteract by her influence the mischances prognosticated by her foresight. She had little doubt of finding herself still useful to her dear, good, indulgent, considerate Harry, as a consoling friend, a forbearing mediator.

Had any one presumed to hint to Sir Henry Wellwood, during those etherial days of courtship which are devoted by the lover to law, and the lady to mantua-makers and milliners, that he could ever *need* consolation when united to the lovely and loving Henrietta, or a peace-maker between himself and the idol of his soul, he would have been very much affronted. But Arabella, who had accompanied Mrs. Delafield to town to be present at "poor dear Harry's" wedding, already found increasing reason to suspect that a beautiful face, with a dowry of two thousand per annum, might not be all-in-all sufficient to the happiness of matrimonial life.

Many things occurred between the lovers, and many more between their respective solicitors, which produced an unsatisfactory impression on Miss Rodney's mind. She had long perceived that Lady Mandeville was a fool; and did not follow the popular prejudice of connecting a bad head with "an excellent heart." She was wise enough to know, that good sense is the foundation of all good feeling; and to perceive, that a person so perplexed by the absurdities of a weak and uncultivated understanding, could not have presided in a profitable manner over the education of her niece. The aunt being a prating egotist, she misdoubted that Henrietta's character might be of the selfish class.

At length, the stormy moments of legal preliminaries came to darken the summer atmosphere of love; and even Sir Henry, blind and enthusiastic as he was, could not but perceive that at the age of twenty, his goddess had contrived to imbibe a most precocious knowledge of the world and its ways. When Lady Mandeville uttered that repugnant Lincoln's-Innism—the word "jointure,"—Henrietta recoiled not from the sound;—listened with great complacency to the discussions that arose between the rival cormorants of the law, respecting the amount of pin-money which was to render her independent of the man of her heart; and worse—far worse than all,—expressed neither surprise nor horror in perceiving, in the draught of a marriage-settlement submitted to Lady Mandeville for approbation, the following loathsome clause:—

"Upon Trust that they, the said N. N. and M. M., or the Survivor or Survivors of them, or the Trustee or Trustees for the time being thereof, do and shall thenceforth, during the joint lives of the said Sir H. W. and H. B. his intended wife, from and out of the dividends and yearly income of the said Trust Fund, raise and retain the yearly sum of £2000, of lawful money of Great Britain, free from taxes, and clear of all other deductions. And do and shall, by equal quarterly payments, on the 25th day of March, the 24th day of June, the 29th day of September, and the 25th day of December, in every year, (the first of such quarterly payments to become due on such of those days as shall

happen next after the solemnization of the said intended marriage,) pay over the said several quarterly instalments of the said yearly sum of £2000, as the same shall become due; and be received into the proper hands of the said H. B., or unto such person or persons, and for such ends, intents, and purposes as the said H. B., notwithstanding her intended coverture, shall, from time to time, after the same shall have become actually due, and not by way of anticipation, by any note or writing under her hand, direct or appoint. To the intent, that the said yearly sum of £2000 may be and remain *a separate personal and unalienable provision* for the said H. B. during her said intended coverture, and may not be subject to the debts, control, disposition, or engagements of the said Sir H. W. her intended husband."

"This, at least, I fancy we may omit," observed Sir Henry, smiling disdainfully, and drawing his pencil across the heinous insinuation.

"And why?" said Henrietta, with calmness. "It is not unusual, I understand."

They were sitting side by side on a sofa—the arm of the lover encircling the slender waist of the "idol of his soul;"—he withdrew it without a word.

"Mr. Codicil informs me," said Lady Mandeville, with an air of importance, "that it is a very proper precaution to insert in the marriage settlements of a young person in possession of Henrietta's splendid fortune and expectations, some provision of this description. No one can tell what may happen."

"And then it is a mere form," said Henrietta. "What does it signify how much nonsense they choose to scribble upon a parcel of skins of parchment, which neither you nor I shall ever read; and which appear to form a sort of etiquette connected with the marriage ceremony."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Henry. "Sacrilege you mean;—a blasphemy against every feeling of generous confidence! *Can* you, dearest Henrietta, can you think it necessary to take such precautions against the man to whom you are about to intrust the destinies of your future life?"

"I hope she would not think of intrusting them *without* such precautions," cried Lady Mandeville, already beginning to suspect nefarious views on the part of the bridegroom. "I have no opinion of people who pretend to be superior to the common ways of the world. If it be the custom to provide a separate maintenance in the marriage settlements of a young person of such a splendid fortune and expectations as my niece,—why not comply?—My friend, Lady Forster, who had not so large an income as Hatty by three hundred a-year, (and no expectations to speak of,) had two thousand five hundred settled upon her for separate maintenance; and only look at Lady Blackacre,—what would *she* have done, I should like to know, with *her* odious gambling husband, if she had not made sure of Blackacre Hall and a suitable provision?"

"But Wellwood is not a Sir Jonah Blackacre," said Miss Broughton tenderly; so tenderly that his arm found its way back again to its original position. "And, at all events, we may leave to the lawyers the tiresome task of discussing the odious measures they delight in suggesting,—a terrible evidence of the knavery of the world!"

"But this clause—" persisted Sir Henry.

"Do let my aunt have her own way," whispered the beautiful heiress; "it is a matter of no importance to either of *us*, and serves to set her mind at rest. Pray comfort her with the notion, that even if you are moved to beat me or turn me into the highways of Staffordshire, you will not refuse to bestow a little bread and water on me afterwards."

Satisfied by her open countenance and beaming smile that Henrietta regarded the matter as one of no moment, unless to appease the silly prejudices of her aunt, Sir Henry withdrew his pencilled erasure; and when the Dean was promoted to the honour of sustaining her ladyship's fainting person in the vestry, and when the bridal travelling-carriage bowled along the Dover road towards Mrs. Delafield's seat in Kent, where they were to pass the honey-moon, he felt satisfied that the marriage settlements had been prolonged by forty-one very superfluous lines. "A separate maintenance!" Ah! poor Sir Henry Wellwood! little did he imagine

that he should one day regard that sentence as the only palliative of his folly—the only consolation of his wretchedness!

Mean while, nothing could be more auspiciously brilliant than the position of the parties. It is astonishing how people rise in the estimation of their friends at the epoch of a prosperous marriage. Sir Henry and Henrietta had both maintained through life a very comfortable degree of popularity; but no sooner did the newspapers announce their union, than they were canonized into saints. While Mrs. Delafield shook her head to all her successive morning visiters, and brandished her cambric handkerchief in honour of the superior good fortune of "poor dear Harry," she was assured on all sides that Henrietta was the most charming creature in the world,—*so* accomplished,—*so* elegant; while Arabella was destined to hear some eight and forty times in the four and twenty hours, that her brother had "drawn a prize."

Even Lady Mandeville, who found it difficult to be satisfied with the excellence of any thing or any body belonging to her niece, had sufficient faith in the unanimous verdict of society, to believe that the Staffordshire hero was at once the most distinguished and most virtuous of mankind. Her friend Lady Wheyfield (who had a cousin whose husband's brother, Lord Shoreham, lived within ten miles of Wellwood Abbey) assured her that he was the best neighbour in the world, and quite an example in the county;—had new-floored all the pews in the village church, and bestowed a sheep to be wrestled for at the Candlemas fair. Her friend Lord Tothill had a nephew, a cornet in the regiment of dragoons in which Captain Wellwood had formerly flourished his sabre, who proclaimed him to be one of the best fellows in Europe. Her friend, the Duke of Warminster, hinted that her new nephew-in-law would do well to stand for the county at the next general election; while the universal chorus of "distinguished officer,"—"high-minded man,"—"intellectual,—well-bred,—conscientious," lasted for full a fortnight after the fall of the curtain in Maddox Street. Oh! plausible adulation,—oh! amiable mendacity!—purporting, like the gracious friendship of a high sheriff

towards some malefactor at the foot of the gallows, to diminish the ignominy and horror of the crisis!—Why must we either be hanged or married to elicit the unanimous interest of our fellow-creatures!—

CHAPTER IV.

I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honey-moon, and had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy.
R. B. SHERIDAN.

ARABELLA was wise enough to decline all the pressing invitations which, in the course of the six following months, reached her from Wellwood Abbey. She judged it better that Harry should become acquainted at once, with the best and worst of Henrietta's character; and was enough of a woman to be aware that the presence of an individual of her own sex, would suffice to impose a mask (the silken half mask of fashionable disguisal) on the countenance of the bride. She even suffered Lady Mandeville to make a six weeks' visit in Staffordshire, and come away quite satisfied that Lady Wellwood's equipages, suite of drawing-rooms, and precedence in the county were every thing the fondest aunt could desire, before she listened to Mrs. Delafield's entreaties that she would go and see how "poor dear Harry" managed to support the wonderful accession of happiness and good fortune secured to him by a marriage with the prettiest girl in London, with a fortune of two thousand a-year.

But Arabella, in preparing for her journey, knew that she was not about to interrupt a conjugal tête-à-tête. There was a friend of Sir Henry Wellwood's bachelor days, a certain Mr. Allstone, who having just arrived from the continent, was all impatience to go and take a peep at the beautiful bride of his old crony, and a run or two with the Wellwood hounds before the

close of the hunting season; and Miss Rodney naturally conceived that he would be far less in her brother's way, if she partly undertook the task of entertaining him. Besides, by visiting them towards the close of March, there would be time to become acquainted with her sister-in-law before the commencement of the London season, without tiring her patience by too long an intrusion on her domestic circle. She was not quite at her ease in the thought of finding a mistress—a fine lady mistress—at the Abbey; where, during her occasional visits, she had been accustomed to the entire confidence of its master; but her own dear Henry was still, she hoped, unchanged—and still, she was quite sure, the most excellent and beloved of brothers.

Of all seasons of the year, March is, perhaps, the least propitious to a formal country visit. In summer, the geniality of the atmosphere dissolves even the ice of unsociability; in winter, the glow of the fire-side ripens the heart into friendly feelings; but March, that month of chilly daylight, of endless mornings, makes people tired of each other twice as soon as when the bright sunshine of midsummer is smiling over its prodigal variety of fruits and flowers and perfumes. Arabella arrived at the Abbey an hour before dinner. Sir Henry and Tom Allstone were not yet returned from hunting; and Lady Wellwood, who apologized for the frequency of her yawns while they sat waiting for the sound of the dressing-bell, by informing her she had not seen a creature all day and had been poring over a stupid book till she was quite *embetee*, seemed overpowered by the fatigues of do-nothingness. They had no mutual acquaintances to scandalize; the Crones and Drones, Pinchets and Winchets, could not furnish more than five minutes of inquiry; nor was Miss Rodney qualified to satisfy the misgivings of her fair sister-in-law, touching "this extraordinary report of my Aunt Mandeville, that short waists are *coming in* at Paris." It was a considerable relief to both of them when Tom Allstone's ringing laugh was heard in the hall; while Sir Henry entering the library, folded the new comer to his heart. Lady Wellwood noticed, however, that his eyes were swimming with tears at the close of the embrace; and secretly voted that they were both ex-

ceedingly absurd. Poor thing!—She had never experienced the warmth of brotherly or sisterly tenderness.

"It is such a bore being obliged to dress for that horrid Mr. Allstone," whispered her ladyship to Arabella, as she lounged up the great staircase with an affectation of showing the *visiter* to her apartments. "I never thought of such a thing before he came. I really hate the sight of the man."

Miss Rodney, having never till now witnessed a symptom of distaste for the toilet on the part of her lovely sister-in-law, could not but form a suspicion that Henry encouraged the idol "of his soul" in habits of indolence; more particularly when Henrietta made her re-appearance in the drawing-room in a blaze of splendour, inferring that she was little versed in the graceful simplicity of half-dress;—that most becoming of all feminine costumes, which evidently falls short of conquest, while it testifies a wife's respect towards her husband and his guests. Miss Rodney felt concerned for Lady Wellwood rather than for herself, when she observed how conspicuous was this bridal magnificence by the side of her own modest elegance. A moment afterwards, she was still more concerned on Harry's account; for the wonder and admiration with which he gazed on the beauty of his wife, proved that he was not in the habit of finding it enhanced by her own exertions.

"Why do you always wear a cap, dearest Hatty?" he whispered, as they crossed the hall towards the dining room. "Your own hair is so beautiful and so becoming. I have not seen it dressed before since we came here."

"What is the use of throwing away time on dress, when there is no one to see it?" said the "idol of his soul," without at all intending to hurt his feelings; and Sir Henry, by way of disguising his vexation, was of course ready with his Lyttleton—

> Where none *admire*, 'tis useless to excel,
> Where none are beaux, 'tis vain to be a belle.

"But *you* are, or were, a great beau," cried Mr. Allstone, who was a very literal person.

"And a great *admirer*—" observed Arabella, gently, "as Lady Wellwood knows better than any one."

"There Hatty, there!" cried Sir Henry; "you see you have every encouragement to excel. So pray indulge my fancy oftener; and tell Lawford to burn half those Frenchified caps with which you love to disguise yourself."

"My aunt Mandeville never wished me to dress my hair, unless to go out," replied the beauty, pouting: "the constant *crepe* breaks it, and wears it out."

"The constant what?"—cried Tom Allstone.

"*You* dunces call it frizzing," said Miss Rodney, perceiving that Lady Wellwood was displeased to find herself exclusively the subject of conversation.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!—Frizzing! and cannot a lady come down to dinner in these times without frizzing, or a French cap on her head?"—cried Tom with a vociferous laugh; while Lady Wellwood directed a look towards him that might have frozen a salamander.

"Remember we have no umpire," remonstrated Miss Rodney. "Two men and two women might dispute on such a point from now till Christmas; therefore I warn you against attempting the argument."

"Argument!" reiterated Tom, with another insulting laugh, while Harry tried to telegraph to his lady a signal for a conciliatory glass of wine. But no!—Henrietta would not see! She leaned very busily over her fish; and had not so much as a smile to bestow on the friend of that horrid Mr. Allstone. The dinner was sulky and comfortless. Sir Henry had no resource but his inquiries of Arabella concerning the Delafields, and others of their mutual relatives and friends, who were far less interesting to Lady Wellwood than to her husband. It was the first time since her marriage she had seen his attention directed to any other than her own selfish self; and by the time the ladies found themselves drinking their coffee in an embarrassed tête-à-tête, Henrietta had conceived almost as strong a prejudice against "that Miss Rodney," as she had experienced during the early weeks of her visit to Tunbridge. It was plain that her comfort was at an end: it was plain that Wellwood's attentions were about to be engrossed by this unwelcome intruder. Could Mrs. Dela-

field have suspected the unsatisfactory impression mutually produced between her sisters by the first evening at Wellwood Abbey, she would have made it her business to write and implore poor dear Arabella's return to town on the following morning.

But Miss Rodney passed too wakeful a night to have the least inclination for the journey. Her midnight cogitations enabled her to decide that the "happiest of men" was, after all, a miserable dog; and that the "most charming woman in the world" could be sullen, peevish, and ill-bred;—that the fermentation had commenced, and that a mediator might already find occupation at the Abbey.

The next day—ay! even before she had been four and twenty hours in the house, the fact became painfully corroborated. Just as she was finishing a letter to Mrs. Delafield, to assure her that she had found their poor dear brother and sister in perfect health, her concluding phrase was interrupted by the hurried entrance of Henrietta into the adjoining room of which the door was ajar, with Sir Henry closely following, and most affectionately remonstrating. Her ladyship's impeded respiration seemed to approach nearer to a fit of hysterics, than any thing Arabella had heard since the scene in St. George's vestry.

"It does not signify," faltered the voice of Henrietta. "It is too late now; the poor thing is on its road to London. Thank goodness! my aunt will be kind to it for my sake—"

"But, my dear, dear Hatty!" interrupted Sir Henry, pleadingly, "you cannot for a moment suppose that I had any unkind intentions?"

"Oh! no—certainly not!—Did I say that I thought you unkind?"

"You have acted as if you thought so."

"I trust I have too much pride to allow any thing belonging to me to become troublesome at Wellwood Abbey."

"Pride! nay, dearest, this is a mere affair of temper; you are bent on vexing and mortifying me."

"You have to thank yourself for teaching me the lesson."

"You seem determined to reduce it to very bad prac-

tice; and make every one a sufferer by your proficiency."

"Except poor Jessy! I have taken care that the only favourite I have in the world shall not be made miserable to gratify old Roddington's whims. Poor thing!—she will be very happy to find herself at home again. Aunt Mandeville would be kind to any thing for my sake."

Miss Rodney, completely mystified, but perceiving that the significant sigh concluding this ejaculation intended to imply a similitude of feeling on these points between her ladyship and her dog, found that a stiff matrimonial breeze was blowing. But while silently closing her letter and resolving to retire unseen to her own apartment, she was shocked to notice Lady Wellwood's insensibility to the tenderness of tone with which Harry now inquired,—"And is not *this* your home, my own Hatty? and would not *I* be kind to any thing and every thing for your sake?"—

But Arabella was not long tantalized by curiosity on the subject of this mysterious feud. While she was dressing for dinner, albeit unused to the gossiping mood, her own maid seemed so bent on being questioned about the "disagreeable business in the steward's room," that Miss Rodney at length gratified her by an inquiry.

"To be sure, ma'am, it does seem strange that when people has every thing this world can afford, they must always be a looking out for grievances; and no doubt it would be a very wrong thing to encourage Mrs. Lawford to say any thing against my lady's temper, only when a thing comes to be so very notorious"—

"Well! Robins,—what is the matter?—I see you have something to tell?"

"Why ma'am, it's all along of this here greyhound."

"What here greyhound?—I see none, and have heard of none at present."

"Bless you, ma'am, no more you will hear nothing on it; my lady sent it off to Lon'on by the mail"—

"And why, and when, and"—

"You see, ma'am, Mr. Roddington having been here at Wellwood, ma'am, before Sir Henry was born as one may say, is apt to take what my lady thinks liberties. And so, ma'am, as he happened to mention to Sir Henry

one morning as the greyhound, what my lady brought with her from town, was apt to get into the preserves and do mischief among the game, why sure he ordered it shut up with the other dogs. And Mrs. Lawford says, ma'am, as the poor beast has been in the kennel these two months, only my lady never once took it into her head to ask what was become of it."

"Lady Wellwood has not had it long: I remember my brother bought it for her last year, just before his marriage," observed Arabella, in an apologizing way.

"And when my lady *did* ask and *did* find out that Jessy was tied up to keep her from poaching, she flied off in such a way, ma'am! and said as her dog shouldn't be no hinderance to nobody, and had it packed up in a basket, and packed off to Lady Mandeville in London."

"Well, well, it is better out of the way," observed Arabella, in order to silence her companion. "Ladies' dogs are generally troublesome in the country. Don't you remember, Robins, that Sir Henry always ordered Fidéle to be tied up when I used to bring him here."

"But I don't remember, ma'am, as ever you took a fit of sulks about it, or——"

"Perhaps I cared for it less than Lady Wellwood does for Jessy, which is the prettiest Italian greyhound in England."

"Why, bless you, ma'am, my lady didn't use to take no notice on it, not she! Mr. Roddington was a saying at tea-time, that she wouldn't have thought a bit about it, only to make an excuse to plague Sir Henry with her tantrums."

"Roddington must be very much altered to allow himself to speak so disrespectfully," said Arabella, with an air of displeasure calculated to put an end to her maid's communicative vein.

She almost dreaded the explanation which she fancied awaited her when she should find herself alone with either of the parties; and no sooner did Henrietta draw up her pretty feet on the sofa with an air of injured innocence portentous of a recital of her wrongs, than Arabella became suddenly engrossed by the surpassing attractions of one of the annuals: those literary toys that lie on the tables of the refined, to supply a hint for ecstasies when the conversation flags. She sat poring

over the engravings till she had mechanically made herself acquainted with all the Stephanoff *pinxits* and C. Heath *sculpsits;* but Lady Wellwood was not to be silenced.

"He certainly *is* the most hateful man on earth!" she suddenly ejaculated.

Miss Rodney laid down her red tabby volume with a look of horror, fancying the charge must refer to her brother.

"I knew there was about to be an end of all my happiness!"

"What is the matter?" inquired Arabella, with a gentle voice and tingling ears.

"It was so very unkind of Wellwood to invite him to prolong his stay, knowing how heartily I dislike him," replied Henrietta, satisfying the trembling Miss Rodney that it was her brother's friend, Tom Allstone, and not himself, on whom her ladyship chose to vent her ill-humour. "That guffaw of his, absolutely makes me shudder; and then it is so impertinent to hear a man descanting and delivering his judgments on the conduct of what he is pleased to call the fashionable world, who is totally ignorant of the common forms of society."

"Mr. Allstone is a man of very good family," observed Arabella, "and might frequent any society he chose; but he happens to be a great despiser of fashion. I never saw any one more completely independent of the conventions of the world. He is incapable, therefore, of understanding how persons may be tied down and circumscribed by the little silken ligaments of the coteries."

"I know nothing about ligaments and conventions," cried Henrietta, sneeringly; "but I *do* know that he is a vulgar, ill-bred man, fit only for a smoking room or a dog-kennel."

The word dog-kennel rekindled all her wrath; and she lay twisting the silken tassal of the sofa cushion, till it came off in her hand.

"I cannot agree with you concerning his vulgarity," observed Arabella. "He is an original;—England, you know, is the land of originals. I never was acquainted with any man but Mr. Allstone, who looked uncompromisingly upon things as they are;—as right or wrong,

rational or irrational.—He is not to be imposed upon by the magic of a name."

"*Irrational,* indeed!—when he is himself little better than a brute."

"Were you in distress of any kind, you would find him one of the most tender-hearted creatures breathing."

"Well, well!—I see that you and Wellwood are in a league to defend him; and therefore *my* opinion must be superfluous: but I shall take care to make it apparent to himself, lest he should take it into his rational head to prolong his visit when the hunting season is over. I have no idea of being insulted by people at my own table."

She did accordingly ensure a most disagreeable evening to all parties; and had not Tom Allstone's heart been as tough as his hunting-boots towards the ebullitions of a lady's temper, he must have winced under some of the flippancies which Lady Wellwood discharged at him in volleys. Arabella was shocked, and Sir Henry distressed; but Allstone seemed amused. He was studying with the eye of a naturalist the singular species of insect, whose silken wings and barbed sting were extended before him.

Lady Wellwood's last dart was of the Parthian order. Just as she was quitting the drawing-room for the night, she suddenly returned for an instant to inform them that her friend Mrs. Etherington would be at the Abbey to dinner on the following day; secretly exulting in her knowledge of the disapprobation entertained by her husband, and the disgust testified by Tom Allstone, towards the fashionable widow and her manœuvres. But when Sir Henry declared war against Jessy, she had resolved to enter into alliance with a favourite still more obnoxious to his prejudices.

It would be ungracious to repeat the ejaculation uttered by Tom Allstone as she quitted the room.

CHAPTER V.

Dorinda's sparkling wit and eyes
United cast too fierce a light,
Which blazes high, but quickly dies,
Pains not the heart, but hurts the sight:

Love is a calmer, gentler joy,
Smooth are his looks and soft his pace;
Her Cupid is a blackguard boy,
Who thrusts his link into your face!

EARL OF DORSET.

MRS. ETHERINGTON did not come alone. It was her custom to divide the autumn and winter among the friends of former years, and the bathing-places where new friendships and acquaintances are formed with so much facility. Sometimes she acquired an adorer in her travels,—sometimes a toady; and it had been her fortune to encounter at Tenby the preceding autumn, "a kindred soul,—a congenial mind," in the person of a Miss Letitia Broadsden, a gaunt spinster of five and forty, with a very long nose, a very long chin, and a tongue still longer than either; the daughter of a Welsh baronet whose person and title were both extinct. She had figured in her youth as a Bath belle,—in her maturity as a Litchfield blue; and now, at "a certain age," found her amusements chiefly dependent on her capacity as a hanger-on to the idle and opulent. Her annuity of a hundred and fifty pounds a-year sufficed to smarten her up for the office, and a dirty spirit of subservience supplied the rest. There was a sparkle of unnatural vivacity, of forced spirits about her, rendering her society as charming an excitement to empty-headed indolent people, as it was hateful to those of right mind and good understanding.

When Sir Henry Wellwood discovered by a letter of explanation preceding by a few hours the arrival of Mrs. Etherington, that she was to be so unsatisfactorily

accompanied, it delighted him to remember that the hunting quarters of his friend Lord Sandys, and his brother Mr. Dornton, were established within the distance of half a dozen miles; and with a view to dilute in numbers the poison of such society as that of Helena and her toady, he contrived before night to transfer the young Nimrods to the Bachelor's wing of Wellwood Abbey. Arabella had nothing farther to apprehend from confidential interviews with her brother's wife:—before dinner on the following day the party was doubled. Her ladyship had now some apology for her satin dress and jewels *a la Sevigne* in the rival finery of Mrs. Etherington and Miss Broadsden; and some consolation under her sufferings from the guffaw of Tom Allstone, in turning to the exquisite Frederick Dornton;—a gentleman who piqued himself on his athletic person, and talked of nothing but the stable, the turf, and the ring, in Molière's "*petit filet de voix*" with a breath perfumed with orris-root, and a little pet pair of mustachios glossy with *pommade a la Vanille!*—In the course of the evening her ladyship was whispered and flattered into fancying herself once more Henrietta Broughton.

Miss Rodney discerned with regret that her brother was destined to pay heavily for his hard-heartedness to the lap-dog; that he was harassed and vexed by the tone adopted by Lady Welwood towards Lord Sandys and his brother; as well as by the contrast it afforded to her ungraciousness with his sister, and his friend Allstone. But the bridegroom was now in some degree initiated into the labyrinths of a fine lady's temper, and forebore to remonstrate or retaliate. Even Arabella had occasion to recognise the judiciousness of his forbearance, while she listened to the chattering (could it be called conversation?) between Lady Wellwood and her female guests, as they sat round a work-table in her boudoir on the following day. They were all most profitably employed;—Mrs. Etherington in rubbing her transfer varnish, in order to complete a pair of frightful screens at six times their original cost;—Henrietta in manufacturing a tawdry work-bag for her dear aunt Mandeville;—and Miss Broadsden in completing some bead medallions for a necklace, ornamented with a series of

full-fledged butterflies greatly resembling the bats and owls nailed against a barn-door.

"Well, my dear Hatty," exclaimed Mrs. Etherington as soon as they were established, "and so you have positively determined to break Lady Mandeville's heart by passing the season at Wellwood Abbey?"

"It must indeed be very difficult to quit so charming a place," sighed Miss Broadsden.

"Is it Sir Henry's fancy or your own?" persisted Mrs. Etherington. "*He* used to delight in London; and you, my dear, are naturally so fond of society, that I suspect you are both playing pretty, and wish to be thought more conjugal than your neighbours."

"To show the world an example of domestic felicity," murmured Miss Broadsden in a qualifying tone.

"Who told you I intended to give up London this season?" inquired Lady Wellwood.

"Lady Mandeville, when I met her at Malvern last October."

"Five months ago!—a period sufficient to alter the views and feelings of any mortal man or woman."

"Not in their honey year, my love. For full twelve months after date of their special license, people are required to be—"not upon velvet,"—but white satin. They can neither "make up their minds" nor "change their minds"—for they must be "all heart." Their loom of life is set on their wedding-day for a year of bliss: and it would create confusion to alter the pattern," said the little widow, glancing maliciously towards Lady Wellwood, whom she regarded as the usurper of her own rights.

"Bravo! my dear Mrs. Etherington," cried the toady, without moving her long nose from the little box of beads into which it seemed to be digging, "you certainly have the most original notions!"

"When we came here last autumn," said Henrietta, calmly, "I may possibly have mentioned to my aunt, that we thought of avoiding a season in town. The neighbourhood was much pleasanter then. Lord and Lady Shoreham were at the Castle, and the Rutherfords had their house full of company; and there were archery meetings going on."

"Charming neighbourhood!" ejaculated Letitia.

"But now that Parliament has met, the place is quite deserted,—quite altered,—and I should shudder at the thoughts of passing the spring here all alone."

"The spring *is* so *very* dull in the country!" said the voice from the bead-box.

"Oh, fie, fie! my dear," cried Mrs. Etherington, "the Rutherfords and the Shorehams, indeed!—In the letter Lady Mandeville was kind enough to show me, you talked of nothing but the groves and gardens; and the delights of an eternal solitude with your beloved Wellwood! There was not a word about archery meetings or country neighbours; except that the monsters *would* sometimes intrude on the happiness of your *tete-a-tete*."

"Country neighbours *are* such bores!" said the voice.

"I was not aware that my letters to my aunt Mandeville were exhibited like a royal bulletin for the instruction of the public," cried Lady Wellwood, with a heightened colour, and putting a pink stitch into one of the green leaves she was embroidering; "but *if* I chose to write such abominable nonsense, I deserve the disgrace of having it betrayed."

"In my opinion people ought to be put in quarantine on their marriage," cried Mrs. Etherington, "lest they should infect the world with their folly. For instance, that sentimental letter of yours almost persuaded *me* to accept Mr. Sheffield, who was just then poeticizing at my feet about 'domestic felicity;' and only see the mischief that might have ensued! I might have already begun to complain of the dulness of his neighbourhood at Sheffield Park."

"As if *you* you were not able to render any neighbourhood delightful!" said Miss Broadsden.

"I do not see why two persons who are fond of society should resign it, because they are able to enjoy it together."

"And to adorn it together," insinuated Letitia.

"Nothing *can* be more absurd!" observed Arabella Rodney, laying down her book and speaking from the fire-side. "Half the unhappiness of married people arises from the exaggeration of their promises during courtship. In a fit of enthusiasm they undertake to

renounce the world and break off all their early connexions, for the sake of one whose affection should rather serve to enhance their value; and afterwards grow angry with themselves and their partner in folly, because they are ashamed to acknowledge the blunder, and resume their place as citizens of the world. Nothing can be more selfish and ungenerous than one of these engrossing attachments."

Miss Rodney would have done better to keep her philosophy to herself; for though Miss Letitia Broadsden shook her head affirmatively and ejaculated, "Too true!" the other two, not exactly understanding her meaning, fancied she was talking of them, and were affronted.

"*I* never was a dealer in fine sentiments," said Lady Wellwood; "and am not aware that I require any apology for intending to pass the season in town."

"*I* never was a philosopher," cried Mrs. Etherington; "but I hold, with Shakspeare, that

> It is for homely women to keep home;
> They have their name thence."

"Then no one, I fancy, will dispute either your own or Lady Wellwood's claim to Almacks and the Opera," said Miss Broadsden in a pacifying tone.

"*Pour le coup*, Hatty, my dear," cried Mrs. Etherington, throwing down her screen, "I think you are quite justified in flying from the roar of such a brute as that fox-hunting friend of Sir Henry's; and I hope, after Easter, you will commission me to look out for a house for you."

"Sir Henry is very anxious to see the new picture-gallery roofed in before we leave Staffordshire," said Henrietta. "I have very little hope of getting away till the end of May."

"And can't you leave him to scold his masons, and listen to the cockneyisms of his clerk of the works, by himself? He will follow you when the business is over; and, *en attendant*, you can spend a cheerful month with Lady Mandeville."

"I *might* do that," mused Henrietta.

"It is so detestable to come to town late in the season!" said the widow,—"just like beginning a novel

by the second volume. We find people making love, or making spiteful faces, without understanding why;—nobody takes the trouble to instruct one who has died, or been married, or ruined, before one's arrival; what *liaisons* have been broken off, what lovers discarded—what partisans bought, sold, or exchanged.—I remember last year, soon after my journey from Paris, condoling with Lady Grunt on the death of her daughter's husband, when it was notorious to every one but myself that the fair widow was already engaged to Captain Percy; and actually inquiring of the Dowager Duchess of Sequence after her very particular friend and adherent old Lord ——" when "Oh! Mr. Dornton!" cried Mrs. Etherington, interrupting herself as the exquisite sauntered into the room, "I am afraid you have had a bad run, since we see you back so early?"

"Not a bad run,—only a bad fall," drawled the Nimrod in the brocaded dressing-gown and Turkish slippers, throwing himself at full length on one of the divans of the boudoir. "Braddyll has been shampooing me for the last hour, to ascertain how many of my bones are broken. I had him taught by Mahomet before the commencement of the hunting season."

"I trust no material injury?" inquired Letitia.

"Nothing beyond the reparation of a little goldbeater's skin," said the exquisite. "A few drops of orange-flower water have set me to rights."

"Then pray come and set Lady Wellwood to rights. Do you know she is bent on renouncing London, to settle down as the Lady Bountiful of the parish of Wellwood!" cried Mrs. Etherington.

"Never heard of any thing so monstrous!" cried Letitia.

"Has any thing occurred to alter your ladyship's view's since last night?"—inquired Mr. Dornton of Henrietta, in an audible whisper. "Pray remember that I only gave up my intended visit to Paris, encouraged by your promise to pass the season in town."

"Oh, Hatty, Hatty! you scandalous hypocrite," cried Mrs. Etherington, holding up her finger, and laughing immoderately.

"Till the end of May, indeed," continued the gentleman in the brocaded dressing-gown, "I am obliged

to remain with Sandys; but I shall not forgive you, my dear Lady Wellwood, if you remain at Wellwood Abbey one day after the 25th."

"After the picture-gallery is roofed in," said Mrs. Etherington, significantly.

"Good morning, Sir Henry," cried Miss Letitia Broadsden, who alone was sufficiently disengaged to notice the entrance of the Baronet.

"Good morning," replied he, with a general bow, and an air of displeased amazement on finding Mr. Dornton familiarly established in a spot which the custom of the house preserved sacred from male intrusion, and which he never visited himself without an apology.

"My dear Lady Wellwood!—pray command me to turn that monster out of the room," faltered the exquisite. "Do you sanction his appearance in your boudoir, in a hunting-coat smelling of horse, and with clay on his boots enough to form the foundation of a canal? —Horrible?"

Lady Wellwood glanced with a scornful eye at the streaks of mud defiling her Tournay carpet; Sir Henry, with equal contempt at the perfumed coxcomb defiling her ladyship's silken ottoman.

"I intended only to acquaint you," said he, calmly, to Henrietta, "that Sandys, Allstone, and myself have promised to dine and sleep at Shoreham. The hounds meet to-morrow at Shoreham Thorns, and we wish to be on the spot. Dornton, do you accompany us?—You left the field before Lord Shoreham came up with his invitation."

"Thank you,—no;—I intend to give myself a day's respite after my fall. If I left the hunting field to *you*, my dear fellow, oblige me by leaving the field here to *me*."

"We will take great care of you, Mr. Dornton," said Mrs. Etherington.

"We will take great care of you, Mr. Dornton," echoed the toady.

"We will take great care of you," *looked* Lady Wellwood; but she smiled, and said nothing.

"And now, having received my Majesty's reply, won't you release us from your boots?" inquired Dornton, after murmuring his thanks to his female companions.

Sir Henry made an awkward exit. There is nothing

more irritating than to be compelled to take a jest *as* a jest, which we are inclined to resent in earnest. Miss Rodney was the only person who rose to shake hands with the departing Baronet. She observed that his touch was deathly cold, and his lips were white with rage, as he bade her a smiling farewell.

CHAPTER VI.

She had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.
BYRON.

ARABELLA was not much surprised to observe, when her brother returned from Shoreham Castle on the following day, that his eyes were hollow and his lips feverish; but it afforded her some satisfaction to see that Henrietta did not appear in much better spirits. Is it hardness of heart, or is it mere levity that prompts us to the perpetration of those trifling injuries which, when estimated by their power to wound the feelings of others, form important links in the chain of existence? —Or, is it TEMPER?—that staple commodity in the great exchange of life,—that moral constitution whose ailments and infirmities exceed the most troublesome disease of physical nature!

Henrietta was a spoiled child;—had never been taught the duty of contributing to the happiness of others;—had found Lady Mandeville's affections amply secured by her pretty face, her graceful air, her showy accomplishments. From her childhood she had been incessantly reminded by her aunt of her own "independence:" as if any human creature—royal, gentle, or simple, could be fairly pronounced independent;—as if wealth and station, important as they are, could form a defence against the irritabilities of sickness, and the loss or lack of the sympathies and good-will of our kind!—But these, Lady Mandeville regarded as superfluous,

and never instructed her pupil to conciliate. The beautiful heiress was reared in all the petulance and meanness of intense egotism.

Even amid the early raptures of his attachment, Sir Henry had, in some degree, recognised the fault originally pointed out by Miss Rodney to his notice. Too much in love, however, to perceive that the error proceeded from want of principle, (even the primal principle of duty towards her neighbour,) he whispered to himself that the fair creature of his affections had been petted into waywardness by her aunt, and that when removed to the cheering and wholesome influence of a country life, she would become as amiable as she was attractive. Nay, he even fancied it would be a delightful task to contribute to the perfectionment of so gifted, so heavenly a being!

But there is nothing more difficult, nothing more perplexing, than to insinuate to persons wrapt up in the consciousness of their own merits, a hint of error or deficiency. From the first months of his domestication with his wife at Wellwood Abbey, Sir Henry had intended, had *longed*, to commence his little system of tender remonstrance; but the slightest insinuation of a difference of opinion was sufficient to fan the embers of Henrietta's distemperature into a conflagration. The blaze was not strong, indeed; for the lady had always been accustomed to find a fit of wilfulness, or of affected despondency, more available and becoming than one of hasty anger. But she was tolerably expert in those piquant flippancies of speech which harass the enemy like a straggling fire; and could contrive, when it suited her purpose, to make herself as disagreeable as if her face had not been that of a cherub, or her voice seraphic.

"A woman," quoth La Bruyere, "must be charming indeed, whose husband does not repent, ten times a day, that he is a married man." Sir Henry Wellwood would have scoffed at the axiom. The "idol of his soul" was still an idol; although, like the votaries of old, he had managed to discover that it was not wholly formed of precious metals; that its feet were of clay! He still fancied himself the happiest of mortals; particularly when Henrietta, in her best looks and spirits,

was riding by his side through the Wellwood plantations, listening to the project of his intended improvements;—or seated in her boudoir sketching designs and modelling plans for his two new lodges. Sometimes after dinner she would busy herself with her guitar, and insist on his attempting a second to her Italian notturno; sometimes she persuaded him to lend her his arm towards the village, to asist in executing that easy work of benevolence, the deplenishment of her silken purse. At such moments she was indeed enchanting;—and the fascinated Wellwood was quite willing to echo the chorus of Mrs. Delafield's visiters, that he had "drawn a prize."

But the sands of life are not formed exclusively of diamond sparks. Flint and granite mingle in the contents of the hour glass; and Sir Henry often found himself required to listen to fractious complaints of old Roddington's innovations, of Lawford's negligence—of roses that would not blow at the gardener's bidding—of London booksellers, who would not send down the new novels in proper time,—of old women who refused to be cured of their rheumatism, and young ones who declined becoming scholars at her platting school. His own misdemeanors, too, were frequent and unpardonable. He had a knack of carrying off the very volume she was reading,—of losing her place, and leaving his own marked by leaving the unfortunate book sprawling upon its face on the table, like a drunkard on the ground. He often kept her waiting five minutes for her ride, or twenty for dinner; would stop and detain her in their walks, while he corrected the practical blunders of some superannuated hedger and ditcher; had a trick of whipping off the thistle-tops while driving her in the garden chair, to the imminent indignation of her ponies; was sometimes seen to nod after dinner, when the morning's run had been a good one; and had an opinion of his own in politics, which precisely reversed those of Lady Mandeville and her coterie.—In a word, he was often very "tiresome!" and whenever the fair Henrietta was excited into pronouncing that sentence on his proceedings, it was a signal for ill-humour for the remainder of the day; or rather till the spoiled child would conde-

scend to be coaxed into a more satisfactory mood of mind.

All this could be endured by a man of forbearing disposition and strong sense, in favour of a young and lovely woman who had preferred him to fifty admirers, and still professed an unlimited attachment towards him. But he had no patience with the coldness of her demeanour towards Miss Rodney, for whom he had bespoken her kindness in terms almost affecting, and whose humiliated position in the world demanded delicacy and consideration; nor with her rudeness to his friend,—his real friend,—his good friend Tom Allstone; whom he had pointed out to her regard as one whose kindness had been most valuable and important to him, before the sudden decease of an elder brother placed him in possession of the Wellwood estates. But as these were the two persons he most prized on earth, they were selected by Lady Wellwood's peevish and jealous temper, as the means of inflicting punishment on her husband. Not that she really wished to give him pain, or really disliked Arabella; but she was idle,—frivolous,—"servile to all the skyey influences" of a rainy or sultry day; and delighted in finding a conductor to carry off the electric fluid of perverseness engendered by a bad digestion and ill-regulated mind.

Unfortunately, Sir Harry had no one with whom he could confer on the subject of his grievances. Though mistrusting the judiciousness of his own mode of management, he had no opinion from which to derive a better system;—he was apprehensive of exciting Arabella's ill-opinion of her sister-in-law by an avowal of his vexation, and still more afraid of exposing his own ears to the sarcasms likely to be wrung from Tom Allstone's lips on the flights and fancies of fashionable ladies. Obliged to brood over his afflictions during his ride homewards from Shoreham Castle, he had the satisfaction of reflecting, that he might thank his own especial invitation for the pleasure of Mr. Dornton's company at the Abbey; and of anticipating that, for a week to come, Henrietta would find, in the pernicious counsels of Mrs. Etherington and the base incense of her toady, ample incitement to farther contrariety. He saw that he had eight miserable days before him!—

So engrossed indeed was the injured baronet by these contemplations, that he was unaware he had any thing else before him; when, suddenly startled from his reverie by an affected laugh, and the echo of three varieties of giggle and titter, he found himself in a lane leading from the Abbey pheasantries to the house; and on the point of running against her ladyship's pony-chair, (in which she was driven by Mr. Dornton, attired in a pink silk waist-coat, white kid gloves, and frieze wrap-rascal)—while Mrs. Etherington and Letitia picked their dainty way along the bank. They all appeared exceedingly merry, and indulged themselves in a thousand biting jests on his abstraction.

At dinner, matters were still worse. Lady Wellwood, who had taken counsel with Mrs. Etherington concerning her husband's barbarity in the matter of the dog, and absurdity in the matter of the dandy, was now resolved to inflict a signal chastisement on him, with a view to secure herself from farther ill-usage; and accordingly commenced a most ostensible flirtation with Mr. Dornton. Sir Henry was fortunately still unaware that, during his absence, the amiable quartette had been amusing itself by a series of petty impertinences to Arabella Rodney, such as were equally new, amazing, and contemptible in her eyes; but nothing could be more evident than the cutting insolence of his wife's present demeanour towards his friend Allstone, and indecorous devotion to the brother of Lord Sandys. During the ceremonial of dinner, her ladyship had no ear save for the insipid nothings of the man whom she delighted to honour; and Mrs. Etherington had consequently the satisfaction of seeing the man she delighted to torment, condemned to a martyrdom of jealous irritation.

On retiring from the dessert-table, the two ladies and a half, (Lady Wellwood, Helena, and the toady) flew together to the dressing-room of the former, to concoct new schemes for bringing the rebellious husband to his senses, or driving him out of them. It required, however, all the malice of the disappointed Mrs. Etherington to keep her pupil up to the mark. Henrietta, self-convicted and uneasy, might not have found courage to persist in rendering her husband unhappy, had not a strong case been laid before her of the wretchedness

awaiting her future life, should she permit Miss Rodney to retain a paramount ascendency over him; or allow *him* to possess a paramount ascendency over herself. She was asked again and again, whether she chose to be a slave,—the slave of her husband's sister;—and of course replied by an indignant "No!"

It was not "no!" however, that she answered, an hour or two afterwards, in reply to Mr. Dornton's request to hear her harp,—her guitar,—her charming voice?—While he lounged at full length on a sofa near the instrument, she favoured him again and again with Sir Henry's pet airs, Sir Henry's pet songs, and every melodious favourite hitherto reserved to grace those evenings sacred to the sentimental domesticity of home. It was wormwood to the provoked husband, as he sat taming down his chafed spirit into the meditative sobrieties of a game of chess with Tom Allstone, to hear her lend peculiar pathos to some tender phrase which he had been apt to believe exclusively addressed to himself; or dwell on some soft allusion which had always before been made the interpreter of her sympathy with that "soul" of which she was the "idol." At every melting close, ejaculations of "charming!"—"exquisite!"—burst from the lips of the recumbent Dornton; and were probably as excruciating to the ears of the baited husband, as in the ears of the lady of the Abbey, was a sort of half howl, half whine, which suddenly issued from those of Tom Allstone,—forming an involuntary response to a minor chord terminating one of Henrietta's choicest Bayleyisms. It was just the ludicrous cry that dogs occasionally utter under the excitement of music or moonshine; and naturally provoked a shout of laughter from every one present. Even the lounging *ennuye* was taken by storm, and became guilty of an unrefined "ha, ha, ha!"—

Lady Wellwood was inexpressibly offended. It was in vain that Tom apologized for his howl, like Cervetto to Garrick for his yawn during the mighty Roscius's performance of Hamlet—"Pardon, Monsieur!—me always do so ven me ver' much please!"—Her ladyship bit her lips with vexation, and uttered something in a loud aside to Mr. Dornton, concerning the necessity of confining such animals to the stable-yard; while Mrs.

Etherington, by way of covering the general confusion, seated herself cheerfully at the piano, and favoured them with the lively French vaudeville,

Tu t'en répentiras, Colin, tu t'en repentiras!
Oui, si tu prends une femme, Colin,
Tu t'en répentiras!

CHAPTER VII.

A fop who admires his person in a glass, soon enters into a resolution of making his fortune by it; not questioning but every woman that falls in his way will do him as much justice as he does himself. When an heiress sees a man throwing particular glances into his ogle, or talking loud within her hearing, she ought to look to herself.

ADDISON.

No jealous person is ever conscious of the distemper. Sir Henry Wellwood stood, in his own opinion, as the most confiding and easy of husbands; and had even promised himself on his wedding-day, that no trivial circumstance or accidental indiscretion on the part of his beloved Henrietta, should ever induce him to betray that susceptibility of feeling by which he had seen so many other men render themselves offensive or ridiculous. On the present occasion, he felt satisfied that his vexations arose less from jealous excitement than from indignation at being set at naught, and degraded by the deliberate insults of his wife.

He bore his fate in silence for three whole days. He saw her set off, morning after morning, to walk with Mr. Dornton in the Abbey shrubberies; and overcome her natural indolence, evening after evening, to copy out for him in a little finical album which formed part of his travelling paraphernalia, every "'Loved of my soul!" and "Take back thy heart!" which had elicited his applause when graced by her melodious repetition; and, at length, even heard her offer him the gift of a "beautiful little Italian greyhound, an old favourite

of hers, which had just been sent away from the Abbey as an intruder." Poor Wellwood attempted to screen his uneasiness by directing his own attentions to Helena Etherington, but the little widow was busily engaged in trying to captivate those of Lord Sandys; and he found himself eventually turned over to Miss Letitia Broadsden, and cutting the ridiculous figure of pairing off with the bore, or butt, of the party. Odious as it was to him to listen to *her* sycophancies, it was ten times worse to picture the sneer with which he fancied himself regarded by Dornton and his brother; and to perceive the irrepressible twinklings of humour which irradiated Tom Allstone's laughter-loving eyes, as he watched the manœuvres of the group. But, on the fourth day, his sufferings became insupportable; and on returning home from the sports of the morning, he flew to Arabella's dressing-room to make a clear breast of his grievances, and demand her advice and commiseration.

It must be owned that he was fortunate in a counsellor. Arabella, though several years his junior, and accustomed to look up to him with as much admiration as affection, had studied his character with that shrewdness of observation which in a sister is never blinded by the partialities of the heart. She knew all his foibles, while she honoured his virtues; and was careful on the present occasion to avoid magnifying his griefs, by treating them with either too much or too little attention,—by receiving his complaints either as absolute jest or absolute earnest. She listened very calmly; and very calmly assured him that, by making his indignation apparent to the guilty parties, he would only gratify their own intentions; while by a grave steadiness of demeanour towards his wife, he might at once defeat the consequences of Mrs. Etherington's suggestions and of her own girlish waywardness. Grieved as she was to see her brother look so ill, and speak so despondingly of his domestic position, Miss Rodney was careful not to encourage his despair by any expression of sympathy.

Cheered by her kind-hearted mode of depreciating the importance and prophesying the speedy termination of Lady Wellwood's fit of perversity, he was quitting her room in considerable elation of spirits, with his

care-worn countenance irradiated by a smile, when Helena Etherington and Henrietta, who had been practising duets together in the music-room, and intermingling their harmonious studies with a running commentary on the insupportableness of cross husbands, and the glory of breaking in a stubborn temper,—came full upon him in the corridor. Conscious and startled, he bowed and skulked guiltily away; leaving Mrs. Etherington to point out to the disgust of his wife the secret understanding and privy council existing between himself and Arabella, where all her own proceedings were subjected to investigation and condemnation. Can it be doubted that on this hint, Lady Wellwood made her appearance for the evening arrayed in all her usual smiles for Mr. Dornton,—more than all her usual ungraciousness towards Miss Rodney? She was at least determined to render Sir Henry and his sister as uncomfortable as herself. Alas! how tormenting was it to the lover-husband, to gaze on the loveliness of her looks, while noting the unloveliness of her mind and manners!—

Miss Rodney had not, however, much leisure to smart under her ladyship's strictures and implications. She was engrossed by Mr. Allstone's account of a visit he had paid to a volcanic island on the Sicilian coast during his recent Mediterranean tour, in company with a party of English dandies, who were yachting in the same direction. At first, Tom's rambling notes were exclusively intended for the amusement of one who, he perceived, was an object of spite to the other ladies of the party; but encouraged by the applause with which his graphic details were received by Lord Sandys (who, although a fox-hunter was a remarkably intelligent, lively, amuseable young man) he proceeded to portray with such admirable strokes of humour the characters of the fresh-water sailors, lisping out their slang, or affecting scientific ardour in a tone half-yawn half-snore, that even the toady deserted the anti-Allstone party, and surrendered herself for once to the luxury of a genuine laugh. Lady Wellwood swelled with indignation;—not only to find the detestable Tom the hero of the hour, but because the very nature of his triumph rendered it impossible to crush him by the supercilious

hauteur which the merry mood of his auditors encouraged him to despise. Even Dornton listened and applauded. So rarely does providence

> ——— the giftie gie us
> To see ourselves as others see us,

that he had not the least conception his friend and partisan in the pink satin dress, was disposed to resent Mr. Allstone's sketch of dandy inanity, as a personal attack on himself. It never occurred to him that there was a family resemblance between the Sir Roger Rampion, who lisped about

> Gunth, dwumth, twumpeth, blunderbutheth, and thunder,

in an accent like the chirrup of a sparrow; or the Colonel Merivale who carried two blue and gold enamel watering-pots throughout the difficulties of peninsular campaigns, to sprinkle his snuff with black and green tea! But while the double refined *ennuye* condescended to join in the general laugh directed against his *caste*, he was not unmindful of his main object; and exonerated himself by lisping "*che bestia!*" in an undertone, to Lady Wellwood, at the termination of Allstone's narrative. Nothing could be more marked than his devotion to Henrietta, nothing more manifest than his pretensions to her favour, nothing more plain than his satisfaction at the uneasiness of his friend, her husband. Her ladyship had no reason to doubt that he had lost his heart, such as it was, during his short visit to the Abbey.

And so indeed he had; and all his present airs and exaggerated affectation were directed towards the captivation of the lady of his thoughts. But that was not the lady of Sir Henry Wellwood. Dornton was no libertine; he was worse,—a cold, hard, calculating egotist; preferring the comforts and convenience of his own little finger before all the charms of Venus and her train of nymphs. Mrs. Etherington's attack upon the liberty of his brother had in truth induced him to make inquiries concerning the nature of her own attractions; and finding them to consist in a pretty face and flighty air of fashion (which were a matter of indifference to

him) and a jointure of two thousand a-year (which was a matter of considerable importance both to him and his creditors) he fell desperately in love; and formed as fierce a determination to

——— take his stand
On the rich widow's jointured land,

and make Helena Etherington his own before he quitted the Abbey, as *she* had herself conceived with regard to the conquest of Lord Sandys. Frederick Dornton, amid all his fiddle-faddle foppishness, united the hard beak of the macaw with its gaudy plumage. With quite as bad a heart and principles as Mrs. Etherington, he had a much better head; and, instead of making his advances in a straight line, according to her own mode of attack upon his brother, adopted that curious species of Irish ordinance which is said to shoot round a corner. He began by making love to her friend, in order that Helena might end by falling in love with himself.

Unwittingly, too, Miss Broadsden lent her aid towards the fartherance of his project. Aware that Mrs. Etherington's marriage would be the end of her toadyhood, that with a husband to be teased by or tease, she would stand in no need of a domestic friend to quarrel with on rainy days, Letitia declared war on Lord Sandys from the moment she detected the favourable views entertained towards him by her patroness; and spared no pains in illustrating the boorishness of his manners and his distaste for female society, by incessant comparison with the refinement of his younger brother,—the darling of half the coteries of May-Fair. But Miss Broadsden, who had been so long erased from the marrying list, and who grounded her interested speculations chiefly on the weakness of her own sex, had quite forgotten that the very name of younger brother covereth a multitude of virtues; and all her florid admiration of "Mr. Dornton's distinguished air," and "Mr. Dornton's fascinating address," would have been lavished in vain, had she not concluded the catalogue of his charms with a remark on his unhappy passion for the lady of the Abbey.

This was decisive. Mrs. Etherington belonged to that most virulent class of coquettes, who have not half so much enjoyment in the triumph of their own charms as in molesting the attachments of others. Seldom, indeed, does coquetry manifest itself in the character of an English woman combined with the playful and joyous delirium of vanity, which forms its basis in the spirit of a fair Parisian. The females of our own country are so little exposed to those attentions of gallantry which intoxicate the mind of French women of every degree, that among ourselves coquetry commonly springs from a perverted nature;—with us it is not an *ignis fatuus*, but a scorching and perilous flame,—it is not a lizard, but a scorpion,—it is not the appetite for selfish pleasure, but "the dear delight of giving pain."

Mrs. Etherington's beloved Hatty had robbed her of Wellwood Abbey and its proprietor, and she determined to take her revenge on all parties by appropriating to herself the proprietor of the brocaded dressing gown and pet mustachios; as well as by hatching a whole brood of mischiefs between Sir Henry and his wife. Even had she been aware of the extent of the unpaid bill in which the former article still remained enrolled, and the prodigious claims existing on the latter among the flirts (married and single) of the day, it would have made little difference in her projects. She had no more intention of committing herself by a marriage with the honourable Frederick, than with Tom Allstone's groom; but simply intended to inveigle him from Henrietta's feet to her own, and leave him there, fairly floored, for the amusement of society. The amiable couple were admirably matched,—coquette against coquet.—But in such villanous strategy, a man has always the advantage; he possesses presence of mind, while his opponent has only presence of heart.

Even Mrs. Etherington's views on Lord Sandys were secondary to her desire of mortifying the triumphant Lady Wellwood. Assisted by Letitia's perspicacity, she had discovered the hopelessness of besieging the affections of an individual whom man delighted not, nor woman either, so long as a horse, dog, or fox was within reach. At best, he was but a young and titled Tom Allstone, a man who would have

been voted a bear, had he not been qualified to vote as a peer.

Without the slightest suspicion that she was herself entangled in a springe, she accordingly began to spread her nets for Frederick Dornton; and satisfied of the superior charm of her gay French songs, when opposed to Lady Wellwood's sentimentalisms,—and the perfection of her own Parisian lightness of foot in the galoppe, when contrasted with Henrietta's sleepy grace, she promoted music and dancing during the evening; and by the familiarities thus ensured between the dandy and the pretended object of his homage, had the comfort of sending Sir Henry to bed with an aching heart and throbbing temples.

Before the party met again at breakfast, however, it was Henrietta's heart that throbbed and temples that ached. She had weathered her first matrimonial storm; —had been informed that it was her husband's pleasure she should not waltz with Mr. Dornton, nor prolong her *tete-a-tete* walks with him, nor decorate her hair with exotics of his selection from the conservatory! "Her husband's pleasure!"—Alas! from the moment that sentence is authoritatively introduced into the conjugal dialogue, half the comfort of a married life is lost. When men begin to talk about their pleasure, it is plain that their happiness is at an end.

CHAPTER VIII.

Laughing satire bids the fairest for success; the world is too proud to be fond of a serious tutor.

YOUNG.

In this premature exercise of authority, Sir Henry acted injudiciously. Henrietta was the frivolous creature of prosperity, vain, selfish, and artificial; but she was not destitute of generous impulses. Nature is an untireable benefactress. In spite of the coldness with which her benefits are received, the ingratitude with which they are defaced, she continues to lavish her good and perfect gifts. Amid all the entanglement of weeds defiling Lady Wellwood's neglected and uncultured mind, a flower or two still rose unheeded.

Had her husband, instead of looking angry and talking big,—instead of bringing forward his prerogative, and making a stand upon his rights,—simply appealed to her affection, she would have given way in a minute. Had he merely whispered in his own "idol of the soul"-ish tones: "Hatty! it gives me pain to see you encouraging the pretensions of Frederick Dornton. Hatty! it gives me pain to see you wound the feelings of my poor gentle unoffending sister," she would have been in his arms in a moment, and probably in those of Miss Rodney the next. She was not hardened; and with such a nature tenderness prevails far more than violence. But if the truth must be owned, Wellwood himself, although both an honourable and an honest man, was not altogether perfect. He was peremptory and opinionated. He had not been trained in the exercise of authority;—he had been a mere Captain Wellwood, of the —th Hussars with five hundred per annum, (a person of no manner of importance to any human creature but the affectionate Arabella) till the attainment of his twenty-eighth year,—and was somewhat apprehensive of allowing his newly acquired consequence to slip through

his fingers. He had not been long enough accustomed to the conjugation of "I will," "Thou shalt," to regard these verbs as mere auxiliaries, acquiring their value from the participle they serve to animate.

He was obstinate, too, as well as wilful; and having been at length incited to an act of despotism, was determined to prop the lath and plaster barrier he had erected with bulwarks of stone. Having prepared himself for a woman's war of words, for skirmishing and sharp-shooting on the part of Henrietta, he assumed a most heroic posture, and came down to breakfast, looking as dignified as Lord Mansfield in his marble wig, among the tombs of Westminster Abbey.

Here, to his infinite surprise, he found the very Lady Wellwood he had left a raging Statira in her dressing-room, presiding over the distribution of the coffee, with a smiling face, arrayed in a morning cap, the pink ribands of which served to overpower the redness of her eyes. No one present would have guessed that any thing had occurred to discompose her; and Sir Henry applied himself with an unanticipated appetite to his eggs and French rolls, full of joyful amazement at her well-advised submission to his authority, and restoration to good humour. Poor man!—his blindness may be pardoned;—he was a husband of only six months' date.

It almost vexed him that he had not breakfasted early and gone to covert with Sandys and Allstone, instead of staying at home to scold his wife. But then Frederick Dornton, in pursuance of his own deep-laid projects, still pleaded his fall as an excuse for absenting himself from the field; and with all Sir Henry's recovered confidence in Lady Wellwood's discretion, he could not quite venture to trust her to the fascinations of so dangerous a companion.

"Congratulate me," said he, kissing Arabella's forehead, as she rose and came forward to meet him in the course of the afternoon, from her favourite seat among the cedar trees that spread their vast branches from the Wellwood shrubberies to the lake below; "I have gone courageously and successfully through my first dispute with Henrietta!"

"I rejoice to hear it! With so many excellent qua-

lities, it is grievous to see her misled by such a weak, flimsy person as Mrs. Etherington."

"I don't fancy that woman possesses any *real* influence over her mind. I have often warned Hatty against her flightiness, and she appeared on her guard. Besides, there are only two days unexpired of Mrs. Etherington's promised stay; and I have strictly forbidden Henrietta to prolong the invitation."

"I doubt the wisdom of forbidding any thing strictly, where you have a generous nature to work on. You would have done well to leave Lady Wellwood to grow weary of her friend; and better still, had you merely expressed your uneasiness, and appealed to her own heart. Depend on it, the answer would have been favourable."

"Well, well!—the same end has been accomplished by different means. You must have observed at breakfast, how little Lady Wellwood found to say to that jackanapes Dornton; and how much and kindly she talked to Allstone and yourself."

"I do not quite like such violent transitions," said Miss Rodney, mildly. "I should have been better satisfied with some faint grumbling of the departing storm.

"Ay, ay! You ladies will never sanction the exercise of authority over other women; you unite, at least, in supporting the prerogative of the sex. But be assured that, with a being so capricious and obstinate as Henrietta, a little firmness is absolutely necessary."

"Between two persons so *capricious* as Lady Wellwood and so *obstinate* as her husband! Nay! dear Harry—be not angry!—but, as a stander-by, believe me I can best judge the chances of the game. *You* are too much interested in the stakes to be a dispassionate observer."

"Well, then,—as a stander-by:—what likelihood have I of check-mating my queen?"

"No likelihood, but a certainty;—talk to her with all the candour, and half the eloquence, and a quarter of the forbearance you used formerly, to employ in weaning *me* from my girlish follies, and you "have her on the hip." Henrietta will prove even a more docile disciple than myself. But tighten the curb too rough-

ly, and the generous steed will rear and throw you over."

"If you *will* borrow your similes from Allstone, Bella, let them be more technical. Mean while, I shall be able to prove to you that I am a better hand in the manège than you imagine."

During the two following days, Sir Henry's opinion on the subject remained uncontroverted. Lady Wellwood was all gentleness, all decorum; she neither pursued her flirtation with the dandy nor her *brusquerie* with Allstone; endured his laugh without wincing; and heard Mrs. Etherington announce her departure for town for the following Thursday, without any renewal of her invitation. Even when Frederick Dornton suddenly explained the necessity he was under of taking leave on the day preceding, and what is termed "running up to town," for the arrangement of some important ballot at one of his clubs, she listened with a serene smile, which Sir Henry hailed as announcing a return of happy days, after the departure of his three unsatisfactory guests. With his friends Allstone and Sandys as the companions of his morning sports, Arabella as the partner of his friendship, and Henrietta as the object of his unremitting adoration, as "the idol of his soul," he felt assured that the Abbey was about to reassume the Eden-like aspect of the preceding autumn. He even managed to be all graciousness to Mrs. Etherington, and courtesy to Miss Letitia Broadsden, during the last four and twenty hours they were ever likely to pass under his roof. The deep-set eyes of the latter twinkled cunningly on either side her long nose, as she noticed the increasing urbanity of his humour.

It had been arranged that Mrs. Etherington, instead of adopting the usual custom of guests departing after an early breakfast, should await the arrival of the post; and the gentlemen of the party gladly availed themselves of her polite request, that her delay might be no restraint in detaining them from their daily sport. They wished her a pleasant journey when she retired to rest the preceding night; and were all four off to the *rendezvous de chasse* by daybreak. It was the decree of the Fates that the hounds should meet that day at Kingscote Mill, full thirteen miles from the Abbey.

It was the will of the Fates also that all that morning should

> Through the hawthorn blow the cold wind
> While drizzly rain did fall!

And it was through that drizzly rain, and across a stiff country, that Sir Henry and his tired hack found their way homewards towards evening—the horse meditating on an extra feed, the rider cogitating on the cheerful, happy fire-side that awaited him at the Abbey, now the widow, toady, and dandy were on their road to London, —and Henrietta herself again. "He whistled as he went for want of"—*not* thought—but care. It is so delightful to feel a storm subsiding around us; to hear the blackbirds and thrushes waking up their tuneful snatches in the dripping shrubberies; to breathe the freshened perfume of the sweet-brier bushes:—it is so delightful—so very delightful—to note returning sunshine on the faces of those we love!

Having entered the Abbey through the offices, the elated Baronet made his way to Lady Wellwood's dressing-room without meeting any of the servants; but on entering that Temple of the Graces, he was surprised to see that, instead of the disorder of the toilet usually prevalent after the sound of the dressing-bell,—instead of the sparkling fire and bright confusion of satins, silks, and laces,—necklaces, ear-rings, and bracelets,—which for the last ten days had encumbered its tables and chairs from six till seven o'clock,—all was cold, orderly, and solitary! The bright steel grate was carefully cleared out,—the windows were still open to admit the chilly evening air,—the covers were installed on the furniture,—the———what could it all mean?—He rang the bell to inquire; and, with admirable consistency, left the room before time had elapsed for a servant to obey the summons.

"*Where* is Lady Wellwood?" cried he to the butler, whom he crossed in the hall while hastening towards the boudoir frequented during the morning by the ladies of the Abbey.

"Hav'n't you had my lady's letter, sir?"

"Where is Henrietta?" cried he, without pausing

to reply to the man's interrogation, but throwing open the door of the room where his sister was quietly seated before her embroidery frame.

"Have you not received her letter?" reiterated Arabella, without intending to annoy him.

The agonized husband uttered some ejaculation concerning the letter, which it might not be decorous to transcribe.

"Do not be alarmed!" replied Miss Rodney, mildly. "Nothing is amiss; nothing important has occurred.—Lady Wellwood left a letter on your library table to explain—"

"I don't care about the letter. Can't you tell me in one word where she is?"

"Somewhere about Litchfield, by this time;—but I fancy she will not sleep on the road"—

"Litchfield!—the road!—Arabella, what do you mean?"

"Only that—"

"Has she,—can it be possible that she has quitted the Abbey?"

"Surely you are aware that—"

"Arabella! Arabella! did she—go *alone?*"

"Oh! dear, no! Why should you imagine such a thing? But her letter will explain the whole business; I will go and fetch it."

"D—n the letter!" cried Sir Henry, falling into a chair. "Tell me all,—tell me the worst. I can bear it—I have courage for any thing."

"A great deal of courage, perhaps," said Miss Rodney; "but certainly very little patience. One would fancy you thought Lady Wellwood had eloped."

"Did you not just now imply—"

"I implied nothing. Stop, stop, dear Harry! and let me tell you the whole affair. Just as Mrs. Etherington was taking leave of us, the London post brought a letter to Henrietta from Lady Mandeville, informing her she was very seriously indisposed, and imploring her to lose no time in coming to London."

"Lady Mandeville?—how strange!"

"Lady Wellwood was anxious to send for post-horses without a moment's delay. But Mrs. Etherington would not hear of her performing the journey alone;

nor would Henrietta delay it for six or eight hours, for the chance of your consenting to accompany her."

"And so, she actually set off with that odious woman?"

"Those odious women, you mean? For notwithstanding the inconvenience of travelling three in a britscka on a rainy day, Miss Broadsden was necessarily of the party. She insinuated to me a hint that I might try and prevail on them to leave her at the Abbey, in order that she might accompany me to town at some future time; but I had no inclination to second the motion. Lawford was therefore despatched by some public conveyance, and Henrietta accompanied her friends."

"Her friends!—"

"Surely it was better than that she should attempt such a journey protected only by her servants?—"

"And Dornton taking his departure so opportunely yesterday evening!"

"*His* departure could have nothing to do with Henrietta's. Till this morning, she did not entertain the slightest suspicion of Lady Mandeville's illness."

"Illness?—Bella, Bella!—it is all a subterfuge. Rely on it, nothing is the matter with the old woman. It is a deep-laid scheme between Lady Wellwood and her advisers;—it is a vile conspiracy to create dissension between me and my wife."

"At present, you have no grounds for such an opinion," said Miss Rodney. "At present—"

But it was useless to argue with him!—Poor Sir Henry was traversing the room with steps that left nothing audible but the tramp of his own hunting-boots. Arabella was almost angry with him for allowing himself to be thus furiously excited by the mere effects of surmise; but she was not angry, she was truly and deeply grieved, when she saw him suddenly stop short, and covering his face with his hands, sink heavily on the nearest chair. She knew that he was weeping, yet dared not remonstrate with his tears.—Poor man!—After all, it was nothing but the sight of one of *her* gloves, lying beside the book he had been reading the preceding night, which moved him so strongly.—Or was it—was it a presentiment that the mistress of the glove would enter that room no more?—

CHAPTER IX.

Small causes are enough to make a man uneasy when great ones are not in the way; for want of a block, he will stumble at a straw.

SWIFT.

"A FAITHFUL friend"—says Solomon—but the proverb is trite, and Tom Allstone's merits need no illustration!

There is no point, indeed, by which faithful friendship makes itself more valuable to its votaries, than by lending itself pliantly, without fuss or form, to remedy the trivial contrarieties of life. The heroic old passion that stalks in buskins is rarely called upon to verify its large protestations; and it were to be wished that the free-and-easy, hand-and-glove sort of fellowship of modern times, would more frequently exemplify its superiority by a patient toleration of procrastinated dinners, or a good-natured endurance of our squalling children, or smoky drawing-rooms.

No sooner did Allstone, summoned by Arabella's interference, make himself acquainted with the matrimonial dilemma of his friend, than he was ready with advice and co-operation.

"Follow them, my dear Harry," said he; "do not give these people an opportunity for triumph, or time for farther cabals. *You* have a right to be alarmed for the state of poor dear Aunt Mandeville's health;—fly to assist your wife in the task of nursing her."

"But Arabella,—Sandys,—yourself!—How can I leave home?"

"If you do not wish to expose Miss Rodney to the fatigues of a hasty journey, let her stay here; and *I* will manage to persuade Sandys he is wanted elsewhere, and we can set off to-morrow morning. If, on the contrary,

she will consent to be your companion, *I* will do the honours of your house for a day or two; but for heaven's sake, don't let the forms of etiquette towards two good-for-nothing idle bachelors, like his lordship and myself, interfere with the more important arrangements of your affairs."

"You are always the best fellow in the world, Tom," said Sir Henry, scarcely able to move his blanched lips. "Bella, love!—you had better remain at the Abbey; you are not strong enough for the scenes that probably await me on arriving in town."

"I shall see nothing of them; I shall go at once to my sister Delafield's," replied Miss Rodney, leaning affectionately over his shoulder; "and I cannot allow you to go alone. Do send for horses, and let us be off."

"To save time I can take my own as far as Redburne. But Lord Sandys—what will he think of us all?"—

"That you are mad, indeed, if you attempt to sit down to dinner with that horror-struck face. Don't wait,—go at once. We must understand that you are wild with impatience to get to Lady Mandeville's sick-room. Those people have six hours the start of you. You *must* manage to overtake them, and make Lady Wellwood enter town under *your* protection."

In pursuance of this sage advice, and acceptance of this satisfactory mode of arrangement, Sir Henry found himself, his sister, and his sorrows, travelling towards London at the rate of nine miles an hour, before the western sky had lost its last tinge of lurid vermilion.

Mean while, the party in the britschka proceeded as uncomfortably on their way, as guilty consciences, heavy roads, and a mistling rain could make them. They were all three ruminative. Lady Wellwood sat meditating on the effect her rash proceeding would produce on her husband. Mrs. Etherington (who had originally suggested the letter to Aunt Mandeville, begging her to be very much indisposed, in order to afford a pretext to the most injured of nieces for a journey to town) was still much in doubt whether her allurements had been as successful as she could wish, in estranging the heart of Frederick Dornton from Sir

Henry Wellwood's wife, or whether her ladyship's flight from the Abbey would be as offensive to the offending husband as she could desire; while poor Letitia, whose neck was nearly dislocated by the position in which she was compelled to niche herself under the hood of the britschka, with the tricklings of a chilly rain oozing down her back, was lost in envy of the lady's maid, cozily established in the rumble beneath the footman's umbrella!—Not Caliban writhing beneath Prospero's inflictions, was ever half so cramped with pains and aches as the unhappy toady!

Yet Miss Broadsden alone was in possession of a fact which would at once have cheered the current of her companions' contemplations. *She* it was who had given private intelligence to Mr. Dornton, between which two turnpikes of the road it would be expedient for him to break down, so as to be stationed at the very inn at Lichfield where her patroness and Lady Wellwood had determined to dine and sleep; and though far the most vociferous of the three in the expression of her amazement on perceiving him of the dressing gown, standing in examination of the barometer in the hall of the Green Dragon when they stepped from the carriage, she had been as fully prepared for the startling spectacle, as a theatrical Macbeth for the apparition of the "blood-boultered Banquo," which causes his knees to knock, and his wig to stand on end. Mr. Dornton's explanation of the causes of his sojourn in so unsavoury a spot was soon given, and with Cæsarian terseness. "I set off from Wellwood last night,—broke down this morning,—am here this evening." And though he yawned out something purporting to be a self-gratulation on their unexpected arrival, he contrived to introduce a suspicion into the minds of both ladies, that he secretly longed to despatch them to the rival capital of the Bishop of Lichfield's diocess. Nothing now remained, however, but to invite him to dinner;—a proposal which the Honourable Frederick accepted with as contemptuous an air as if he had cherished the intention of eating his roast fowl alone, and paying for it by a draft on his own banker.

It was amusing to see the creature seated with a su-

percilious smile on the hard black horse-hair sofa, allowing Henrietta and Helena to court him into good humour. Although it was a real annoyance to the former to find him an inmate of the inn, and although for five minutes she reflected most uneasily on the untoward interpretation such an incident might bear in her husband's opinion, yet having been in truth guiltless of all connivance in the affair, Lady Wellwood soon recovered her spirits; and with that frivolous love of conquest which nothing subdues in the mind of a coquette, rallied herself to surpass the lively sallies of Mrs. Etherington, and to induce the languid Frederick to acknowledge that *her* presence could impart a charm even to the parlour of the Green Dragon.

Thanks to the abundant cautions, hints, and reprehensions forwarded by the fastidious guest to the culinary department, dinner was not served till nearly ten o'clock; and—while the individual in corduroys and cotton stockings, who excruciated Mr. Dornton by inviting him to a red leather case of greasy bottles, containing portions of red lead, genuine toad-stool ketchup, and other condiments essential to the fried soles of "the curious in fish sauce," stood marvelling what sort of a creature the gentleman might be who was so very much more of a lady than the long-nosed Letitia,—the gaping and weary toady sat helping herself abundantly to sour sherry, from a dusty decanter and a wine glass which the waiter polished with a dirty cloth before her eyes. Still, with all the defects of the dinner, the blazing fire was cheering, and the oddities of the scene amusing. The horns of the mails,—the jangling of the bells,—the clamour after the "*chambermaid!*"—the shuffling of the slip-shod waiter across the sandy hall,—the reek of remote punch and tobacco,—the evening papers brought in smelling of cheese,—all served to divert persons unaccustomed to the scene. The martyr-like attitude of poor Dornton excited the irony of Mrs. Etherington and the laughter of Henrietta; Letitia, after finishing her cruet of sherry, grew as anecdotic as Mathews; tale succeeded tale;—and never, amid the elegant refinements of the Abbey, had any one of the party been half so entertaining, or half so entertained.

They were sitting round the fire, with the greasy newspapers for screens, laughing heartily over their coffee, when the door was suddenly thrown open;—and in walked Sir Henry Wellwood, and Miss Rodney!

CHAPTER X.

What an Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is improvident jealousy? My wife hath sent to him—the hour is fixed!

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

It is not to be supposed that the gentle and right-minded Arabella had any taste for participation in such a scene. Differing in opinion from Tom Allstone respecting the eligibilities of a meeting on the road between her brother and his wife, she had quitted the Abbey with the belief and hope that they could not overtake Lady Wellwood till she was fairly installed under the protection of her aunt; and that she herself ran no chance of being personally involved in a domestic squabble.

Like some lover in a fairy-tale, cross-examining the wood-cutters by the road, Sir Henry had applied himself to the waiters of every inn where they changed horses, to know if "they had seen a beautiful princess pass that way;" till at length, on driving into the court-yard of the Green Dragon, he was struck by the sight of Mrs. Etherington's carriage, from the panels of which the head ostler, illuminated during the operation by a stable-lantern hung upon a pitchfork, was busily employed in scraping off both mud and varnish. Like Duke Aranza's Juliana, the caitiff

"Lightened his labours with a cheerful song;"

addressing his tender apostrophes in a voice that would have deafened a storm in the Bay of Biscay, to the hind

wheel of the carriage which he was twirling beneath his mop—

"May thoy lot in loife be 'oppy, hundisturb'd by thoughts o' me;
The God as shilters hinnercence—

(Dom the wheel!—it's as con-trairy as a hooman)

thoy gord and goid shall be."

"Where is the party to whom that carriage belongs, fellow?" interrupted Sir Henry, from the chariot window.

"I never wants to zee thee more, thof I be still thoy friend!"

sang the ostler;—and it was some moments before he could intelligibly explain to his interrogator, that "the ladies wot belonged to the bridgy" (for the carriage was of course the noun-substantive in the ostler's mind) "was a dining in the parlour along wi' the young gemman wot belonged to the brown calash."

"Open the door!" cried Sir Henry to his footman, suiting an action to the word, which certainly would have fractured his knee-pan, did not that providence which watches over drunken men, deign sometimes to look after men in a passion. He was in the stable-yard in a moment; while Arabella, flying after him, struggled to possess herself of his arm, or a breadth of his cloak, in hopes to moderate the vehemence of his movements. Mean while, the two waiters and a chambermaid, who stood flaring three tallow candles in his face, vainly vociferated to the intruders their regret that there should not be a vacant bed in the house. Sir Henry shoved them aside without remorse, desiring to be shown to the presence of the parties "belonging to" the calash and the britschka. The result is already before the reader! Yet no—not the *whole* result—not the consternation of Lady Wellwood—not the malicious triumph of Mrs. Etherington—not the still more triumphant vain-gloriousness of the conquering hero in the dressing-gown!—Miss Letitia Broadsden was the only member of the party sufficiently disengaged in mind,

body, and estate, to rise and offer chairs to the intruders; but Dornton was the first to speak.

"Ah! my dear Wellwood! I thought you would not be able to reconcile yourself to the notion of remaining alone at the Abbey, with only Sandys and Allstone, and leaving Lady Wellwood to the pleasing task of administering draughts and lotions to her suffering relative in town. How many hours have you been on the road, —my dear fellow,—and what o'clock have we brought it to?—I fancy my Bréquet caught cold on leaving town, for it has never gone right since I entered Staffordshire."

Mr. Dornton did not want an answer, and did not receive one;—Sir Henry had gone straight across the room to his wife, and, with prodigious mastery over his feelings, conversed with her in a general way respecting Lady Mandeville's illness. Miss Rodney strove, mean while, to divert the attention of Mrs. Etherington and the toady, by entering into an elaborate discussion of the state of the weather and the roads, or *she* at least would have detected in the inflections of her brother's voice, the anguish of his heart.

The first words of Sir Henry's harangue to his wife that became generally audible to the party, were, "As it appears there are no beds to be had here, I will remain half an hour while Arabella takes some refreshments, and *your* baggage is prepared, and then we can proceed on to the next stage."

Now, had Sir Henry only given precedence to the baggage of his wife over the refreshments of Miss Rodney, all had been well. But Lady Wellwood could neither support the ignominy of hearing her sister-in-law named before herself, nor endure the glances of pity and contempt launched at her by her friend Helena, and her friend's friend, Mr. Dornton. She set her teeth together for a moment, and planted herself firmly on the ground, to screw up her courage to the sticking-place; then coolly informed her husband that it was not her intention to travel farther that night,—that he and Miss Rodney could do as they pleased, and that she would follow them in the morning with Mrs. Etherington.

"Allow me to say"—Sir Henry began in a stentorian voice.

"Dear Henrietta," pleaded Miss Rodney, interposing, "pray take me to your room and lend me a warm shawl; you can settle this business afterwards."

But her friendly desire to pacify the matrimonial feud, by obtaining a few minutes' conversation with her sister-in-law, unbiassed by the presence of her false friends, was completely thwarted by the temper of Henrietta. She would not allow the spiteful Helena an opportunity of spreading a report among their London circle of friends, that Lady Wellwood the heiress,—Lady Wellwood the beauty,—Lady Wellwood the bride,—was already hectored into tameness by her husband's sister. While Letitia's eyes twinkled applause of her spirit, she replied with scorn that she had no shawls to lend, that she had left them all at the Abbey, and that there could be no advantage in procrastinating the arrangement of their plans. "It is my intention to reach town late to-morrow night, or early the following morning, with Mrs. Etherington. To-night we all sleep here," persisted Lady Wellwood, conclusively.

"Well, well," cried Miss Rodney, trusting her brother might be persuaded to acquiesce in the plan. "Let it be so! you can easily make arrangements for joining Harry in town, since we shall be there so long before you."

How difficult is it to deal with persons of touchy dispositions and narrow minds!—Again, the phrase was at fault!—"You can make," implied to the grammatical ear of the spoiled child, "I will allow you to make;" and to be sanctioned in her actions by a Miss Arabella Rodney, was almost as intolerable as to be forced into a travelling carriage with her, like a sulky school-girl, and talked at by Sir Henry for the remaining hundred and nineteen miles of their journey. Again Frederick Dornton's compassionating glances fired up her soul to resistance.

"I am not aware how far your *relationship*" (there was a harsh emphasis on the word, which brought a flush into the pale cheek of Arabella) "may authorize you to interfere in the affairs of Sir Henry Wellwood; but I must request you will not extend your influence to mine. I am going to town to the residence of my nearest relative, on business of my own. I shall not hurry or retard my movements to indulge the caprice

of other people, and I beg I may be no obstruction to your own journey."

"HENRIETTA!" said Sir Henry, in a voice that appered to jar all the glasses, tumblers, rummers, and punch-bowls on the sideboard:—but he could not utter another word. Having previously retreated a few steps to lean against the table, he now advanced towards her and fixed upon her a glance which seemed designed to penetrate the most secret obscurity of her thoughts and intentions. Instead, however, of shrinking or recoiling from the investigation, (though her heart throbbed and her limbs trembled with consternation,) she returned him look for look, inquisition for inquisition; and bravely stood her ground, when, at the expiration of a minute's silence, Sir Henry threw his cloak over his shoulder, drew the arm of Arabella within his own, and without deigning to bestow the slightest token of notice on any person present, quitted the apartment.

As soon as they reached the hall, Miss Rodney sobbed forth an entreaty that he would not be precipitate; that he would return and request a private interview with Lady Wellwood; she even begged permission to proceed to Mrs. Delafield's in a post-chaise, that *her* presence might not still farther irritate the feelings of Henrietta. But he replied only by pressing her arm tenderly to his side.—"His sister!—his own poor unfortunate Bella!—towards whom he had so affectionately laboured to attemper the disdains of the world; she to be coarsely insulted by his wife in the presence of such beings as Dornton and Letitia Broadsden!" But though these thoughts passed through his mind, not a syllable passed through his lips. He motioned to his footman, who was standing great-coated, oil-skinned, and Belcher-handkerchiefed in the hall, that the carriage was to draw up. All had been previously settled with the Green Dragonites, by the John who now hastened to slap up the steps and slam to the door with the noisy dexterity of a machinist in a pantomime. Away they went,—"all paid!"—at the pace of one of Rothschild's couriers; and illuminating the London road with the blaze of of their patent, self-reflecting, self-protecting, metallospheroido carriage-lamps;—which alas! blazed not half

so fiercely through the mists of night, as the flame of conjugal indignation igniting a crater of vengeance within the heart of the injured Sir Henry Wellwood!—

It is really amazing what strength of mind and body the most nervous ladies can conjure up, to carry them victoriously through whatever storms it pleases them to provoke. Lady Wellwood, nurtured by the hysterical Lady Mandeville in all the morbid susceptibilities of female temperament, was by nature or custom a great swooner of swoons; but except a little choking in her throat, which was drowned in the departing rumble of the wheels of Sir Henry's chariot, she maintained a most heroical self-possession throughout their fracas. While a unanimous shout of "Bravo! Lady Wellwood!" "My dear, I congratulate you!" burst from the lips of her companions, she sat motionless in her chair, with an air of calm magnanimity worthy to have adorned the mother of the Gracchii.

"And what do you mean to do?" inquired Mrs. Etherington; who, having accomplished her purpose of agonizing Sir Henry Wellwood, and humiliating the officious sister by whose influence her own plots had been originally circumvented, had no immediate duty to perform but that of carrying off Mr. Dornton. "After all, perhaps you would have done better to accompany them. Lady Mandeville may take it into her head to scold us for our proceedings."

"I am tired of being scolded," cried Henrietta, rallying her spirits, "quite tired!—Henceforward I am resolved to act on my own judgment, and with a view to my own happiness."

"As if she had ever studied that of any other person," *thought* the toady.

"Thank heaven, I am perfectly independent; and I will no longer be a puppet, danced up and down at the good will and pleasure of every one who can talk longer or louder than myself."

"To be sure not!" said the toady.

"And since I find that my comings and goings, my friendships and attachments, are to be regulated by the officiousness of a mischief-making girl like that Miss Rodney, I shall take care that the separate main-

tenance provided by my aunt Mandeville's foresight, secures me from farther insult from Sir Henry Wellwood and his family."

"Quite right!" yawned the dandy, taking snuff; for he was not yet sufficiently secure of Mrs. Etherington to withdraw his attentions from her friend and rival. "It will be the duty as well as the pleasure of all Lady Wellwood's admirers, to maintain her in so judicious a determination."

"Ah! my dear Henrietta,—take care how you quarrel with your cake," said Helena, somewhat piqued. "You will find two or three thousand a-year and a poky house in some obscure street near Portman-square, a very different thing from Wellwood Abbey with fifteen thousand."

"Two or three *hundred*, with peace and quietness, would suit me quite as well."

"Quite as well!" echoed Miss Broadsden, on whom the hint of her patroness was not thrown away. She had in fact been too much harassed by the caprices and ill nature of Mrs. Etherington during the seven months their kindred minds had commingled under the same roof, not to feel that almost any change would improve her condition; and having noticed the liberality of Henrietta's hand, and the generosity of her heart, she now decided that a Lady Wellwood, living separated from her husband with an income of several thousands per annum, was a far better speculation for her toadyship than a Mrs. Etherington with the same "means" but very different "ways;" with as restless a look out after a good match as the most cunning chaperon that ever wore turban; and as malicious a grudge against every attention bestowed on the rest of her sex, as rankled in the heart of the ancient Letitia herself. From the moment the amount of her ladyship's separate maintenance was indirectly set forth, she formed a secret determination that Calais and Dover should unite into one city, sooner than Sir Henry and Lady Wellwood into man and wife!

During that eventful night, while Henrietta moistened her pillow one moment with repentant tears, and dried them the next with the angry flush of her fevered cheek, Miss Broadsden lay forming projects for the morrow's

malice. From Lichfield to London, she took care that her fair companion should be supplied with an infinite variety of aggravations against her husband and his sister;—that she should learn the lady's-maids' reports of Mr. Roddington's sketch of her ladyship's life and times for the amusement of the steward's-room; that she should be impressed with the weight of remorse likely to assail Sir Henry Wellwood's mind at the mere hint of a separate maintenance. It need not be doubted that Henrietta entered the mansion of her dearest aunt Mandeville at the close of her journey, intent only on putting the affection and firmness of her husband to the proof, and on ensuring the banishment of Miss Rodney from his counsels.

The frantic joy with which she was welcomed by the foolish old dowager, did not diminish the evil. Even the remembrance of Wellwood's idolatry waxed pale by comparison with the crack-brained adoration with which Lady Mandeville gazed on her restored treasure, and encouraged the details of her injuries and afflictions.

CHAPTER XI.

Should all despair
That have revolted wives, the tenth part of mankind
Would hang themselves.

WINTER'S TALE.

ALTHOUGH the whole world seems inclined to applaud the dictum that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, it may be observed, that the "multitude" constituting a party, whether political or domestic, forms too unanimous a jury to merit much attention. While Tories listen exclusively to Tories, and Whigs have only ears for Whigs, the opinions to which they yield attention might just as well be concentrated

by a single voice, and delivered through a speaking trumpet.

And thus, while Lady Wellwood thought proper to intrust the secret of her matrimonial grievances only to the choice coterie of Lady Mandeville's card-playing dowagers and spinsters (a corporation professionally opposed to the oppressions and innovations of the foul sex,) she stood very little chance of having her wisdom augmented, or her ill temper reproved. Her own garbled narrative of wrongs, had inflamed the mind of her indignant aunt to a most exaggerated view of the case; and it was this magnification of Sir Henry's misdoings and her ladyship's sufferings, confided in strict secrecy to thirty old ladies per diem, which travelled the town from Bryanston Square to Storey's Gate, gathering matter like a snow-ball by the way, and forming an inviting nucleus for farther calumnies. Before she had been three days in town, while her husband and herself (mutually indignant as they were mutually attached) were bent on maintaining all the etiquettes of the most froward perversity,—each having determined that the first step towards elucidation should proceed from the other, —a thousand injurious suspicions were instilled into her mind. Old Lady Buntingford protested that it was originally understood to be an interested match on the part of Sir Henry Wellwood; Mrs. Maria Brudenell acknowledged she had always heard the gentleman's object in marrying was to secure a home for his sister; and old Miss Fillingwell assured Lady Mandeville in confidence, she knew from the best authority, that Wellwood had only proposed to Miss Broughton in the pique of having been refused by Mrs. Etherington. Hour after hour, poor Henrietta sat exposed to volleys of poisoned arrows, launched at her with the best intentions by the kindest and dearest of her friends.

No sooner did Miss Broadsden discover that the venom was taking effect—that the mind of the indignant wife was beginning to fester and gangrene—than she ventured on new weapons. Faithful to the interests of the most injured of victims, she was at Henrietta's bedside before her eyes were open, with Jeremaids over the perverted statements of *her* conduct which were gradually finding their way into society, sanctioned, doubt-

less, by the dotage of that silly puppet, "poor dear" Mrs. Delafield, and invented by the malice of that vile designing upstart, Miss Rodney. Still more enraged, and consequently still more credulous, the provoked wife rose to listen to Letitia's assurances that "it grieved her to speak; that had not dear Lady Wellwood's eyes been opened, nothing should have induced her to give utterance to her own vague suspicions. But she *must* say she had reason to think, that *all* the hours of Sir Henry's absence from the Abbey had not been *uniformly* passed in the hunting field. He *had* been seen at *very* odd hours, and under *very* strange circumstances, loitering about the village. Mrs. Etherington's own maid was pretty near *sure* it could be nobody but Sir Henry she met in the dusk one evening, walking arm and arm with a prodigiously smart farmer's daughter of the neighbourhood; and as *his* character in such respects was notorious enough in the country previously to his marriage, it was to be feared that the present proprietor of Wellwood Abbey would show as dangerous an example in point of morality as his predecessor. Miss Rodney would probably have some little nameless nephews and nieces to keep her ugly face in countenance. Not, to be sure, poor thing, that *she* thought her face ugly,—or she never would have passed so much time in trying to decry the beauty of her sister-in-law. Mrs. Etherington and Letitia had heard her say fifty times, and in the most disparaging way, that *she* saw nothing very *wonderful* in Lady Wellwood's face; and that as to her *figure*,—her waist was as square as a packing-case!"

Every reader must have observed how readily a fagot bursts into a blaze, after having been previously warmed over the embers. This last sulphurated match was not applied in vain. The ignition was instantaneous; and when Henrietta received, in the course of the day, a note containing only—

"How long is this to last?—When will you admit me, that every thing may be cleared up between my dear Henrietta and her affectionate "H. W."

she actually reclosed the billet, and sent it back in a

blank envelope!—Lady Mandeville and Miss Broadsden applauded her spirit; and Lady Wellwood, though half wild with feverish excitement, protested she had never enjoyed a triumph half so much in her life.

The following day, a new motive for dissatisfaction presented itself. It appeared, or was reported to appear, that Sir Henry Wellwood had been making inquiries of Lady Mandeville's servants respecting the visiters admitted to her ladyship; with a particular clause in reference to the brother of Lord Sandys. "Suspected,—traduced,—exposed to the ill-opinion of her own domestics!"—was it to be supposed that the divine Henrietta Broughton would stoop to the endurance of such an outrage?

"Doubtless he wishes to procure evidence to accomplish a legal separation," observed Mrs. Etherington, who was present when this last atrocity was set forth in Lady Wellwood's hearing.

"Oh! certainly," echoed Letitia, loud enough for Henrietta to hear. "We can all understand that it would be very satisfactory to the parties to have a separate maintenance arranged; so that Miss Arabella Rodney might settle herself at once to do the honours of the Abbey to the fox-hunting savages, and Sir Henry be at liberty to walk about in the dark with his tenants' daughters."

"If I were you, Hatty," cried Mrs. Etherington, whose object it was to torment, not to estrange the unloving couple, "I would disappoint them *all* by asserting my rights and assuming my lawful authority. I would go back to the Abbey in defiance of them! You know he *can* have no evidence to invalidate your claims. Take my advice, and compel him to receive you with proper respect."

"*Compel* him?" cried Henrietta; her plumes ruffling like those of an angry bird. "No, indeed! *My* only exercise of power on this occasion will extend to the signature of a separate maintenance. Thank heaven, my dear aunt is still willing to receive me; insulted as I have been, I have still friends to protect my interests and watch over my happiness.

She left the room on uttering this declaration, for her heart swelled within her beyond her own power of con-

trolling its emotions; and she would not expose her tears to the scorn of persons so prompt in malicious interpretations as Mrs. Etherington and her shadow. She soon repented, indeed, that she had even allowed them to be witnesses of her hasty declaration. Without sufficient generosity of mind or strength of character, to feel that an opinion wrested out of the heart by temporary irritation may be repented, and honourably retracted, she kept repeating to herself that "having *declared* her intention of insisting on a separate maintenance she must maintain her consistency. Were she to relent, what would those two women say of her?—What would the world think of the poorness of her spirit, the meanness of her concessions?" Lady Wellwood had not yet attained that advantageous epoch of human experience which reveals to the pilgrims of the earth (or to that detachment living within reach of coterie-influence the clamours of the daily press and the verdict of the loungeocracy) how fruitless are the sacrifices we lay on the altars of what is called the World;—the epoch when we discover, like Princess Parizade in the tale, that ten thousand idle voices in the air calling on us to turn back from an undertaking, are but a snare to mislead us from our path.

Even after Lady Wellwood had sanctioned the proceedings of Lady Mandeville's solicitor in demanding from her husband a mutual arrangement confirming her independence and his own, on the grounds of incompatibility of temper (other and more grievous charges being reserved to oppose any resistance he might be inclined to offer to the suit) she would have given her right hand for an accidental meeting with him, such as might secure a general explanation, and probably the restoration of a good understanding. But while Miss Letitia Broadsden—hourly more enchanted with her new prospects, and disgusted with her former patroness—continued to haunt her society, influence her opinions, and even regulate her movements, there was little hope of such a consummation.

At *her* suggestion, an answer, chilled fifty degrees below zero, was returned to the kind, amiable, feminine letter, by which Arabella strove to mediate between the belligerent parties. At *her* suggestion Lady Wellwood

was either "not at home," or "particularly engaged," whenever Mrs. Delafield's carriage drove to the door; nay! even when Miss Rodney hit upon the expedient of walking to Lady Mandeville's with her maid, and requesting admittance to her perverse sister-in-law under the designation of a "person wishing to speak to Lady Wellwood on business, it was still Letitia's foresight which enabled her to penetrate the mystery of Arabella's green veil, and to despatch Mrs. Lawford as her plenipotentiary to the "person" so pertinaciously intruding."

Mean while, Sir Henry was not much to be envied He had the comfort of passing Frederick Dornton in St. James's Street, with Jessy following at his heels, without any reasonable grounds for horse-whipping or shooting either dandy or dog. Although he entertained very little doubt that Henrietta's motive for seeking a separate maintenance was the desire to emancipate herself from restraint, and throw off a tie grown hateful to her in order to indulge in her predilection for the brother of Lord Sandys, he could not obtain the slightest hint of evidence tending to establish such an opinion.

"Well, well," cried Tom Allstone, who had now joined him in town to lend a Patroclian ear to his murmurs, "if it be really so, the thing will prove itself. You will eventually obtain a divorce, and liberty to form a more judicious choice. And if not, (as I really and honestly believe,) why you will soon find the silly girl grow tired of her peevish folly, and come begging to be installed once more as the idol of your soul."

"I doubt it—I very much doubt it," cried Sir Henry, who, from the obstinacy of his own character, was perhaps enabled to estimate that of Henrietta. "Now she has got this cursed notion of a separate maintenance into her head, and surrounded as she is by a tribe of silly, mischief-making women, there is no chance of a lucid interval. The thing must take its course."

Its course consisted, *of* course, in a great many six-and-eightpenny worths, and thirteen-and-fourpenny worths of snip-snap between the solicitors; inferences and confutations,—imputations and refutations,—proposals and disposals;—divers folios of seventy-two words each (the most provocatory that could be picked

out of the folios of the great lexicographer) being exchanged on the occasion, between Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn, with an occasional opinion from Knight Rider Street, Doctor's Commons. But the conclusion of the business was enveloped in a document inscribed on parchment, authorizing "Dame Henrietta Wellwood, of Wellwood Abbey, in the liberties of Stoke, in the county of Stafford," to reside for the future with the partial old aunt whose folly had been the origin of all her errors; and securing to her sole and separate use, the quarterly payment of two thousand per annum.

In all probability, the signature of this important document was a matter of satisfaction only to the attorneys intrusted in its composition, and the toady interested in its execution. Dame Henrietta Wellwood, whom it chiefly concerned, was triumphant, but not happy. Even Lady Mandeville was mortified at the notion of her niece's resigning the family diamonds and her set of grays, before she had been so much as presented. There was something ignominious in the affair: Mrs. Etherington whispered as much to her the very day after the deed was formally signed. However, it was too late now. The satisfaction of having a second scene to go through within a year of the one so brilliantly represented in Maddox-street, did not console her for the loss of Wellwood Abbey; besides, though she considered it her duty to repeat the dead feint on the present occasion, the proctor was not worth mentioning after the dean—he wore only a round hat, and took the liberty of examining her complexion through his spectacles! She had ample leisure to ponder over this the following week, when she found herself settled at Sandgate, with Miss Letitia and Dame Henrietta, by way of temporary retirement from the notice of society.

And Sir Henry?——Wounded to the very heart's core by this sudden,—this premature,—this extraordinary overthrow of all his hopes,—of all his happiness,—his struggles were, indeed, bitter! his disappointment, his mortification insupportable. Eager to shun the world which he knew must be engaged in an impertinent discussion of his mischances, and loathing that home which was now rendered hateful to him by so many humiliating reminiscences; detesting even himself,

whom he accused of obstinacy, idiotcy, and an infinite variety of amiable qualities, he looked despairingly round the world for a refuge for his harassed body,—an occupation for his jaded mind.

The copious development of the organs of constructiveness and destructiveness in his cranium probably decided his selection. He commissioned a popular architect to devote a few of his loose thousands to the erection of a new wing to Wellwood Abbey; and without consulting sister or sisters,—Roddington, or Tom Allstone,—made arrangements at the Horse Guards for re-entering the army. A vacancy unfortunately presented itself in a crack Hussar regiment, on the point of embarkation for the Peninsula; and within three months of the scene at the Green Dragon, Major Sir Henry Wellwood was reduced to the vulgar level of humanity by a fit of severe sea sickness in a government transport in the Bay of Biscay. He was undergoing the preliminary probation necessary to become a hero.

CHAPTER XII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him; he was a mark
For blight and desolation—compass'd round
With hatred and contention.

BYRON

It has become so much the fashion during the last three or four years to insert at the head of those interesting periodicals, the playbills, "A lapse of five years, or a lapse of twenty years, is supposed to occur between the first and second acts," that it is not encroaching unreasonably on the credulity of the public, to request its faith in the expiration of *four*, between chapters XI. and XII. of this present narrative. The re-

markable events illustrating the interval may be omitted without any material loss to the reader;—being simply the death of Lady Mandeville of a surfeit,—and, after repeated refusals on the part of the lady, the union of poor dear Arabella with the redoubtable Tom, now, by club acclamation, *Mr.* Allstone, and a senator.

In the month of June, then, 1813, about four o'clock in the afternoon, a warm clear afternoon, moistened by a five minutes' shower just sufficient to render the London dust a perfume instead of a nuisance, a postchaise and four was seen galloping over Westminster Bridge, followed by hundreds of "stupid starers," who, for once became intelligent;—and a chorus of "loud huzzas," for once well-merited. The chaise was covered with laurels!—"An aide-de-camp of Lord Wellington," "glory,"—"triumph,"—"victory,"—"twenty pieces of cannon,"—"loss of the French, prodigious,"—ran echoing from mouth to mouth as the vehicle rattled onwards to Downing Street. An officer with a soiled and travel-stained uniform stepped from the chaise; and after ten minutes' interview with Lord Castlereagh, proceeded onwards to the Horse Guards.

The victory was the battle of Vittoria;—the bearer of the laurel-crowned despatch—Lieutenant Colonel Sir Henry Wellwood!—

Alas! that time should have slipped away like the waters of an ebbing ocean, leaving us stranded on the beach, to depict as a point of history that critical Bonapartean epoch, when the destinies of Europe and of fifty thousand British soldiers, seemed suspended on every blast of the newsman's horn;—when a Gazette was not, as now, a dry record of forty bankruptcies per week, enlivened by his "Majesty's gracious permission to Mr. Dickens Tottentot Dickens, of Tottentot Park, to assume and bear the Tottentot arms quarterly with those of Dickins;" and catastrophized by his Majesty's gracious offer of his gracious pardon, and a still more gracious largesse of £200 to "whoever shall discover or bring to light the incendiary or incendiaries concerned in the malicious burning of a barley-mow and piggery on the twenty-seventh day of March, whereby eleven pigs were consigned to the flames at Eastington Croft, in the county of Lancaster!"—when the name of

Wellington, or "Welling-t-o-n," as it was prolonged by the *tartarea tromba* of the news-venders, was sufficient to collect a mob as respectable and important as those just now commanded by the oratory of Colonel Jones; when the mere announcement of a courier had power to set thousands of beating hearts in motion; children trembling for their fathers,—wives trembling for the fathers of their children! not to specify the agonies of the young ladies, whose barley-sugar susceptibilities are of inferior moment.

But, alas! amid all these perturbations, *who* was there to tremble for the gallant Major Wellwood, when the horn sounded and the wet sheet of the sixth edition of the Evening Courier steamed by the fire-side of so many an anxious circle?—Who was there to seek out the —— th Hussars, amid that perplexing numeral catalogue of the loved and lost?—"KILLED,—WOUNDED,—MISSING,—TAKEN PRISONERS!"—how completely have we lost the agonizing sense once attached to these fatal words! —For many a year the first has been familiar among us when expounding the extent of some patrician *battue;* while the "MISSING" seems good only to head some advertisement of a lost bracelet, or "A GENTLEMAN" stolen or strayed.

Once indeed,—on one unfortunate occasion, when the despatch announcing a disastrous skirmish near Burgos happened to be penned by an honourable field officer, of Harrow caligraphy and Hibernian perplexity of intellect, that very word,—that fatal "MISSING"—was erroniously attached to the name of the proprietor of Wellwood Abbey; and the result of the blunder may serve to determine the reply to our leading question. During the week that intervened previously to the arrival of the following courier, it was by Mrs. Allstone *alone* that the War Office was pestered with daily inquiries; and with the exception of a bribe offered for early intelligence to a junior clerkling by a certain Sir Thomas Riddlesworth, a notorious adorer of the beautiful Lady Wellwood, no one testified the least interest in the event.

But if they cared not for his departure from this life, it was impossible to remain indifferent to his arrival in this kingdom. Perhaps of all sublunary triumphs,

there is none greater than to be the bearer of intelligence capable of drawing forth smiles or tears from seven millions of human beings. The conquering General himself, (washing the "damned spot" from his hand at the close of a victory, with ears deafened by the recent shouts and roaring ordnance which so well obeyed his behests, his nostrils excoriated by smoke, his eyes irritated by the glare of countless phalanxes, and haunted by the spectacle of a plain encumbered with dead and dying—perhaps the parting pressure of some beloved friend and valuable comrade still lingering on his hand,) tastes but sparingly of the cup of glory, compared with the buoyant, unresponsible, glowing aide-de-camp who brings to the feet of his sovereign the intelligence of some mighty victory,—confirmed by a captured eagle, or tributary bâton. For once the population of the kingdom is unanimous. "Beautiful," says the Scripture, "are the feet of the bringers of good tidings!" To them every heart warms,—every hand is extended. For a moment, the coldest individual is inspired with enthusiasm; for a moment, the sounds of "our country, our liberty,—victory,—triumph!"—may be heard hovering on the lips of the selfish man, and animating the dulness of the dolt;—for a moment, the simple captain of dragoons becomes a demigod.

And yet, amid all these national gratulations, the smiles of royalty, the flummery of ministers, the caresses of their ladies, the mob round the hotel, the squibs and crackers in the streets, the firing of the Park and Tower guns, and the ringing of all the bells from Padding to Mile-end, the heart of Sir Henry Wellwood soon relaxed in its elation. On returning home from a star and garter dinner party at the Premier's, having shaken hands with some score or two of females in shawls and straw bonnets, assembled in the hall of the hotel to catch a sight of a right-down, real, living whiskered, and mustachioed hero,—he retreated into his own room, weary with praise and the catechismal condescension of the illustrious, to pause for one desolate moment in the brilliant tumult of his career.

He had still a task to perform before he retired to

rest; to answer three or four anxious notes of inquiry from the friends of friends and comrades he had left behind, for which half a dozen gaping footmen were waiting below; and two or three letters to indite, enclosing tokens intrusted to his care,—some by the living,—some by the dead.—He had a lock of hair to deliver from a lover to his plighted bride; he had a ring,—a wedding pledge,—taken from the cold finger of an expiring hero to convey to the mother of his orphans. It was no very cheering occupation to draw forth these treasures from his pocket-book, and remember that *his* hair, *his* bridal token, would have been sought or prized by no mortal breathing: nay, that their appearance would probably be hailed with triumph by the worldly woman whom his death enfranchised from her bonds.

He had neither friends nor kindred in town to diminish his isolation. Arabella he knew was at her husband's seat in Yorkshire; and though the intelligence of his arrival would probably bring her to London, many days—a week—must elapse previously to her appearance; and even then, her husband and her two children now claimed their share in that warm affection which had formerly been exclusively devoted to himself. Mrs. Delafield, his more immediate sister, was living at Mortlake; but Sir Henry was too well acquainted with the delicate state of her nerves to venture on disturbing her at midnight. He knew he must wait till morning to intrude on so inveterate an invalid; and as the natural or national reserve of his character whispered that it might be accounted an act of display to visit his own beloved and faithful club, in regimentals, to be questioned and complimented, he contented himself with ringing the bell for a glass of iced water and the Court Guide, and resolved to retire to that rest which many sleepless nights rendered so desirable.

The glass of iced water is a demand readily to be understood by those who have chanced to be successively pledged by the united cabinet in ministerial claret. But the court guide!—what a paltry appetite for a man blackened with the smoke of a recent victory:—the pedlar of Marshal's batons and imperial eagles!—Perhaps,—for his Hussar jacket had done the state and

himself some service,—he was bent on ascertaining whether Stulz still issued his golden bills and golden bulls from Clifford Street. "STULZ!" (oh! Westminster Review! where is thy ferule of office?)—

But it was not * * * * *, nor any other tailor nor tradesman of the metropolis, who moved his curiosity. Sir Henry had not been long enough absent from England to confound the Court Guide with the Directory. It was to the Ms he turned,—where no Mandeville appeared, excepting as "T. V. Mandeville, *sol.* King's Bench Walk, Middle Temple;"—to the Ws, and no Wellwood met his eye excepting a "Mrs. Wellwood, Blenheim House Academy, Brompton Row!" He was compelled to retire to bed without any more explicit acquaintance with Henrietta's whereabout, than if she had been some enterprising martyr smitten with the love of African discovery; and seeing that Thomas Allstone, Esq. M. P. was an inhabitant of St. James's Place, he slept as well as he could upon that barren intelligence.

The morning came; and some dozen of old acquaintances, who now styled themselves friends, crowded round his breakfast table, to inquire, lament, assert, gather news for general circulation, and triumph in the possession of an inexperienced ear into which to pour all the twice-told tales of the preceding month. Never had poor Sir Henry been so superfluously favoured with scandalous reports, hints of changes in the ministry, drawing-room divorces, and cabinet squabbles,—probable flirtations and certain elopements. He was made to listen to insinuations concerning a Lady A——, for whom he cared not a straw; and revelations touching the Marchioness of B——, whom he had never even seen; but not a syllable was whispered touching Lady Wellwood. No one was exactly aware of the terms subsisting between himself and his wife. The world knew there had been "a quarrel—but nothing wherefore."

It did, however, afford him considerable satisfaction, notwithstanding the philanthropy inseparable from the triumph of such an epoch, and the delight of swallowing a wholesome English breakfast, after much travel by sea and land, the straits of a campaign and the

Straits of Dover, to learn that Mrs. Dornton, that brewer of mischief, was now condemned to swallow some of her own bitter decoctions. Annuities and mortgages, bills, bonds, and debts of honour, had done their worst to teach her the error of her ways in allying herself with a self-conceited spendthrift; who made no scruple in alleging the shrewishness of her temper, and the unloveliness of her person, as his apology for seeking his amusements in every one's home but his own. The Honourable Frederick was said to leave his wife to the undisturbed enjoyment of her poverty; while her only engine of retaliation was the power of stunning him with a conjugal storm. Sir Henry could scarcely refrain from inquiring whether her friend Henrietta had abandoned her; but he had not courage to pronounce the name.

At length, he got away from the button-holding throng, which hastened to disperse itself through the clubs and disseminate the intelligence he had afforded. The carriage was waiting to convey him to Mortlake; and as he bowled smoothly along that royal road of many gardens, refreshing, indeed, was the sight of English verdure, and the cheerful stir of an English population, after four years of toilsome campaigning, embellished by the grease, garlick, and Guerillas of the Peninsula. Home associations came thronging round his heart. He looked on the green elms, red roses, and smiling faces, and thought of his own Staffordshire, till a sigh rose to his lips, and a tear to his eyes. The past was more vividly before him than the present. "I will not think of her," cried he, aloud; although it was a place rather than a person which avowedly occupied his imagination.

But whoever might be the "her" thus cavalierly consigned to oblivion, it was certainly Mrs. Delafield on whom he strove to direct the current of his conjectures;—Mrs. Delafield, whom he had left an infirm sufferer, reclining on the sofa with a disorder of the spine; and whose letters of querulous complaint during his absence continued to reveal the decline of her long impaired frame. When he remembered that it was now three months since he had been favoured with a letter from Mortlake, Sir Henry almost trembled to approach

the residence of his sister. She had lost her husband during his absence from England.—Good, easy, snoozy, boozy, feather-bed Mr. Delafield had gone to sleep in the family vault among his fathers, instead of his arm-chair among his children; and there is something mournful in approaching a mansion where the funeral achievement of its master greets us on the wall, in lieu of his extended hand in the parlour. Mrs. Delafield had been nearly two years a widow; and on so feeble a constitution the inroads of affliction could not but be appalling.

On arriving at the beautiful villa, whose lawn would have formed a park for any continental chateau from Calais to Prague, Wellwood was informed that his sister was absent; that on the receipt of the letter announcing his arrival, she had "rode into town."

"Ridden into town!" mechanically reiterated Sir Henry to the gray-headed butler, who stood with smiling investigation examining his sunburnt face and toil-worn person. "How unlucky that I did not notice the carriage!"

"My mistress was a hoss-back, sir," replied old Drummton, "but when she larns as you have come out to visit her, no doubt she will instantly set off back again. Missus was on her bay mare, which doesn't make above an hour and ten minutes work of it from Hyde Park Corner, to Richmond Hill."

Sir Henry Wellwood looked aghast. "Mrs. Delafield *ride* to London, Drummton!—Mrs. Delafield endure the fatigue of——"

"Why, bless you, Sir Henry," said the old man, "it is just that very fatigue that has set poor dear missus on her legs again. You see, sir, just afore master's last illness there was a new-fashioned doctor called in; and *he* said as all Mrs. Delafield's dispersition rose from lying on a sofa, reading o' novels and drinking o' physic. And he ordered Missus to throw away all the draughts and the new books from the library, and to buy herself a stout hack as would trot five miles a day afore breakfast; and bless you, sir, she's been a different thing ever since. Missus drinks a power o' porter, sir, and she's as stout as an Irish charwoman."

Sir Henry could not repress a smile at this extraordinary statement. "Poor dear" Mrs. Delafield trotting

five miles on a stout hack! "But how was my sister ever persuaded, Drummton, to make the attempt?—I should as soon have thought of her ascending Mont Blanc."

"Why, bless you, sir, so long as it was any thing ordered by a doctor, missus was sure to take it. After she'd been a swallowing draughts of arsenic, and hemlock, and henbane, and a power of other poisons to please 'em for many a long year, sure it wasn't much worse to get on a good horse, and eat a good dinner like other people?"

Yet not even when the copiously enlarged edition of his sister strided into the room in her riding habit,—having, according to Drummton's prediction, trotted back from town as fast as a punchy cob would carry her,—could Sir Henry Wellwood believe that he beheld the pale, tremulous, chilly, half-alive, Mrs. Delafield in the comely dame before him. He forgot the forty horse power of quackery over a female imagination. He forgot that she had been a victim to the successively prevailing disorders of liver, spine, and digestion. He forgot, or perhaps knew not, that hard exercise and hard fare were the hobbies of Sir Jacob Collingbury, the last new fashionable Esculapius; and that half the expiring and declining fine-lady invalids in town had been suddenly torn from their pillows, seated upon high-trotting horses, and fed on barley bread and raw beefsteaks; that a few had expired in the attempt, while ninety-five per hundred recovered their health and understanding.

"And so, my dearest Wellwood, you are really come to live among us again," said the portly equestrian, in a sort of hail-fellow-well-met tone, wholly unrecognise-able as the panting whisper he had formerly felt it so difficult to understand. "Collingbury tells me your regiment is ordered home; and I trust, now you have overcome all your unpleasant feelings, you will give up the army and settle once more at Wellwood Abbey. Collingbury says it is much the wisest course for you."

"Collingbury!—Who is Collingbury?"

"Have you never heard of the famous Sir Jacob Collingbury, the most eminent practitioner of the day? He cured poor dear Lady Nodham of her asthma just before she died, and——"

"But surely, my dearest sister, in your present robust state of health, you have done with the doctors?"

"Done with them?—My dear Henry, I never was in so alarming a condition, as at the present moment——"

"With that brilliant complexion?"

"Which indicates plethora!—How do I know that I may not be on the verge of apoplexy?"

"And that portly person——"

"Which plainly demonstrates dropsy:—Collingbury owned to me yesterday morning, that he hardly knew what to make of me."

"You will find it difficult to alarm me under your present aspect. But now tell me about Bella and her husband."

"What can I tell you about them?—She is so happy that she hardly ever finds leisure to write to me; and Collingbury desires me to be studious in avoiding sedentary occupations, so that our correspondence has almost dropped. I have promised to take Blanche and the boys down to Allstone Hall for the holydays."

"And have you no tidings, then, of our mutual friends?"

"Why—a—let me see!—I think you knew the Carringfords? When Collingbury looked in yesterday morning on his way to Windsor——"

"My very dear sister," said Sir Henry, interrupting her, and taking a seat beside her on the sofa, "can you not spare my dignity, and conjecture that I am dying to question you concerning Lady Wellwood?"

Mrs. Delafield was always interested by the word "dying,"—but on this occasion she had not much to relate. "I have only seen her twice since you embarked for Spain," said she. "Once I passed her on the stairs at the dentist's, and a slight bow marked our recognition; and once again I saw her at the evening lecture at St. George's Church. That was about eight months ago."

"And how was she looking, and who accompanied her?"

"There were two lady-like looking girls with her. As I wrote you word, that nasty Miss Broadsden resided with her only a few months after Lady Mande-

ville's death; and as to her appearance, I must confess, I thought it very alarming."

"Indeed," cried Sir Henry, starting up.

"The extreme brilliancy of her complexion looked to me *extremely* hectic; and Collingbury thinks——"

"Collingbury!" pshawed poor Wellwood.

"—that from all he saw of her last autumn, there must be something radically wrong about her lungs."

"Oh! Sir Jacob Collingbury then attends Lady Wellwood?" said Sir Henry, re-seating himself and growing forbearing, in the hope of eliciting some intelligence respecting the idol of his soul. "I fancied she no longer resided in town."

"She has a cottage at Putney, a place called Myrtle Bank;—much too near the river to be wholesome."

"I thought she would not be able to tear herself effectually from London."

"She might just as well bury herself among the wolds, like Arabella; for I understand she rarely mixes in society. When I lost poor dear Mr. Delafield, she had the decency to send here once or twice to inquire after me; but that is all the intercourse I have had or wish to have with such a person."

"Such a person?"—interrupted Sir Henry, with a rising colour. He never could bear to hear Henrietta abused by any one but himself.

"If all Collingbury says about her be true,—and I'm sure I don't know what reason we have to disbelieve it —Ah! here is luncheon!" cried the buxom dame, as Drummton threw open the folding doors of the dining room. "My dear Harry! how gratified you must feel, after all your privations, by the sight of a good, wholesome, English beefsteak!"

CHAPTER XIII.

It was a trying moment, that which found him
Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,
Where all his household gods lay shattered round him.

BYRON.

SIR HENRY saw that it was a hopeless case. Although Mrs. Delafield's disparaging mode of allusion to his wife tended to excite his curiosity, he judged it expedient to wait the arrival of his own dear, rational Arabella, before he suffered himself to be irritated by premature aspersions; and tried, mean while, to interest himself in the increased latitude of her sister, and longitude of her daughter and sons.

But his own dear, rational Arabella had now a gouty fox-hunting husband to share Sir Henry's claims upon her affections; and instead of hastening up to town, as he expected, was compelled to beg her brother would visit *her* at Allstone Hall, so soon as he could terminate his business in London. At the end of a week and a long journey, he had, accordingly, the happiness of finding her engrossed by the arrangement of Tom's footstool, and Tom's easy chair; and in spite of those unsatisfactory accessaries to the scene, the meeting between the three was replete with gratifying associations.

"How well you are looking, with your bronzed face and slim figure!" cried Arabella, contemplating with pride the noble person of her brother, rendered more manly and dignified than ever by athletic exercise and military discipline. "You are quite a different person from 'Captain Wellwood,' or the carpet knight of Wellwood Abbey."

"I *am* indeed a different person from the hot-headed,

hot-hearted fellow you used to be so fond of. But you must love me still, Bella! for though wonderfully changed,—though chilled into a mere automaton,—I cannot dispense with Allstone's regard, and *your* affection."

"You will have no need," cried Allstone, from his easy chair. "Believe me, Harry, your absence has been the only draw-back on our happiness. I will not tell you how often I have vexed Arabella by cursing your obstinacy in setting off for Spain without one word of warning to your friends. But now we have you here once more; and I trust you won't again be in a hurry to run from a lesser evil to a greater. What has a man with a landed estate of twelve thousand a-year, to do in the army? You have duties to your country which ought to keep you at home."

"And *will!*—The skeleton of my regiment is on its passage to England, and I have no taste for the moral extinction of passing three or four years in country quarters."

"I fancy, Harry, you are sadly wanted at the Abbey. Roddington complains terribly of the incursions of the Goths under this famous Mr. Pilaster of yours."

"And Mr. Pilaster of Roddington. I have received quires of mutual complaints during my absence. But I shall be there in a week or two, to redress grievances and punish trespasses."

"The new wing was quite finished when we were in Staffordshire last autumn," observed Mrs. Allstone. "It requires nothing now but the upholsterers."

"I shall leave them to the discipline of your little Tom, some twenty years hence. The house is too large for me already; and I dare say I shall be very little there."

"Then why have you been throwing away fifteen thousand pounds, for the benefit of Pilaster and Co.?"

"It was always my father's intention to complete the Abbey; and I conceive it to be every man's business to do his best, in his generation, for the benefit of his family place. Besides, I was not sorry for the excuse afforded me by the disorder of building, to absent myself from the spot. It would have been very embar-

rassing to meet all my neighbours while their minds were harping on my domestic misfortunes."

"From that annoyance you have nothing farther to apprehend," observed Tom. "The Shorehams are done up, and starving in Italy on a few thousands a-year; and Lady Maria Rutherford is now a regular Cheltenham loo-player."

"And better still," said Sir Henry Wellwood. "I have myself grown indifferent to the opinions of the world. Four years of hard campaigning have brought me to my senses. I care now only for realities, and no longer afflict myself with imaginary evils."

"Bravo!" cried Tom. "At this rate you will reconcile me to your Quixotic flight to the Peninsula."

"You will find I have brought back something better than a few ugly scars, in the shape of moderated resentments and a subdued mind."

"My dear Harry," said Allstone, "henceforward I shall hold Wellington the greatest general under the sun. The truth is, that no two persons ever trifled away their happiness so grievously as you and Lady Wellwood. Irascible and obstinate as the devil, neither of you would listen to a word of advice, or you might still be living together in all the comfort and respectability of domestic happiness."

"It is better as it is," replied Wellwood, sternly; "I have never regretted, and have nothing to regret in the business."

"Never was there any thing more gratuitously absurd than your separation," continued Allstone, without listening. "Both were captious—both irritable. —*She* had been coaxed up by her aunt, and *you* by my silly little wife there, into fancying yourselves entitled to unqualified consideration;—*she* chose to be a goddess, and *you* a god.—But what then?—There was worship enough to be had in the world for both of you! Sir Henry Wellwood might have exercised his authority at the Quarter Sessions and county meetings,—and her ladyship have entertained a pet toady, such as that horrid old Broadsden. In short, there was nothing to prevent you living comfortably on together,—tifting and making it up again like all married people: and

owning that the atmosphere of life is all the sweeter for an occasional storm."

"Such is not my notion of matrimonial comfort," said Sir Henry, gravely: "nor could any thing have rendered my life happy with such a person as Lady Mandeville's niece. My error lay in the original choice; I ought to have known better than to expect merit from a woman whose pretty face was connected with so shallow a head, and so shallow a heart. Never was woman so mischieviously educated as Lady Wellwood."

"I thought you said just now, you had left all your resentments in Spain?"

"And so I have!—Believe me, my dear Allstone, there is not a person on earth I regard with more thorough indifference than the lady whom the law still compels me to call my wife. Were it not that a regard for my own honour requires me to be in some degree acquainted with her proceedings, I should never trouble myself to ask a single question concerning her. She is the very last woman capable of interesting my feelings!"

"You had much to exasperate you," observed Mrs. Allstone, in a low voice; "but we were all to blame. There needed only a judicious adviser to set the whole affair in a proper light."

"Ay, ay!"—cried Tom. "Thank God! my darling Bell was no heiress. Those separate maintenance clauses are just so many incentives to insubordination; allowing every perverse, peevish, pettish wife to ensure her personal independence at the expense of her husband."

"Lady Mandeville bequeathed her whole property to Henrietta," observed Mrs. Allstone. "She has now five thousand a year."

"So I understand. She was arrogant enough with half as much; I suppose she makes a great figure in society?"

"Lady Wellwood is very popular, and prodigiously admired; but I do not fancy her increase of fortune has much to do with the interest she has managed to excite."

"No, no!—she is a victim,—a sweet, injured, interesting victim!" exclaimed Allstone. Lady Mande-

ville and the long-nosed thief old Letitia contrived to make the world believe you used your wife deucedly ill; and the defendant being absent, judgment was suffered to go by default. The first spring in town after you joined your regiment, I pleaded myself hoarse in your behalf; while Mrs. Delafield devoted full twelve months to expounding the injuries undergone by "poor dear Harry." But it would not do.—People had already settled that you were a monster: and a monster I fear you still remain."

"As they please!—Her ladyship is plausible enough to 'make the worse appear the better cause,'" said the calm philosopher, swelling with indignation.

"And then she certainly *is* devilishly handsome," cried Tom. "I never saw a woman so improved! Her figure so much filled out, and her countenance so much more impressive."

"She was such a mere girl when she married," said Arabella. "At twenty neither mind nor person is fully developed. I have heard many people cite Lady Wellwood as one of the most agreeable women and entertaining companions in England; and when *I* knew her, she had certainly no title to such a reputation."

"The Dorntons, I suppose?"

"No!—I seldom see Mrs. Dornton; and never without hearing from her something ill-natured concerning her former friend. The quarrel with Miss Letitia Broadsden brought to light circumstances that could not but dissolve all connexion between the parties; and Henrietta has no intercourse with any of them. The people who praise her to me are chiefly friends and acquaintances she has made in the world."

"Lady Wellwood can be charming enough in a ballroom," said Sir Henry, in a tone of pique. I am not surprised that she increases the number of her partisans. I only trust that I may never have the misfortune to meet or be molested by her again. A separate maintenance is at least some counterbalance to a matrimonial blunder; but I have to grieve that the law refuses its enfranchisement to two people already disunited in the sight of Heaven."

Allstone and his wife saw that he was vexed; and

considerately refrained from farther allusion to the subject. Sir Henry was so dear to them both as a friend and brother that they could not but enter into all his prejudices and feelings; and since it was too late to render any assistance in reconciling the dislocated couple, they judged it better to promote his future happiness without reference to the past. As soon as the gout would permit, they accompanied him to the Abbey; with a view to divert his mind from the painful reminiscence connected with the spot, and to diminish the awkwardness of his meeting with his country neighbours. The sight of Arabella's pretty little girl and boy rolling about on the lawn, certainly imparted a new feature, and a prospective charm to the place; and with something to look forward to in the education of little Tom (whom he already adopted as his heir) the poor solitary Baronet was in some measure relieved from his isolation.

Even amid the annoyance of investigating the practical treachery of the great Pilaster to his own plans and projects; even while engaged in granting audience to old Roddington's complaints, and audit to his accounts; even while compelled to admit that the new wing was a beautiful superfluity, and that the disorder effected in the domain by the squadron of vagabonds engaged in its construction, was a serious vexation, he had still a secret moment of leisure to devote to memories of the past, and mournful anticipations of the future. He occasionally even forgot the wife with whom he had passed a few weeks so miserably at the Abbey, to remember only the bride who embellished his first few months of marriage, in that happiest of homes.

One of the numerous charges contained in his despatches from Spain to Mr. Pilaster, had commanded the demolition of a rustic building in the pleasure-ground, commenced under Henrietta's auspices; while the flower garden planned by herself, had been dug up at his suggestion, and another spot selected for the commencement of a new one. But without confessing it to himself, he now regretted his hasty act of destruction; and often wished that some trace remained of that epoch of his happiness, which was not the less precious for having proved evanescent.

Nothing commemorative of Lady Wellwood in fact was left at the Abbey. All her property,—every trifle she could call her own,—had been scrupulously despatched to her at the time of signature of the deed of separation; and even a trifle she could *not* call her own, a splendid full-length portrait from the pencil of Lawrence, having been formally demanded by Lady Mandeville through the medium of her solicitor, was despatched to her in silent scorn by the injured husband.

A few unimportant objects discovered by Mrs. Allstone on her arrival at the Abbey, were carefully removed, in her anxiety to spare the feelings of her brother; and Sir Henry had cause to doubt whether the dream of his married life were not a mere coinage of the brain;—whether he had in truth been the lover,—the bridegroom,—the husband,—the aggrieved and resenting husband, of the beautiful Henrietta Broughton. The new wing, standing, uninhabited in all the ghastliness of its white freestone, appeared erected as a monument to his departed happiness!

CHAPTER XIV.

> What a bridge
> Of glass I walk upon, over a river
> Of certain ruin,—mine own weighty fears
> Cracking what would support me; and those helps
> Which confidence lends others, are from me
> Banish'd by doubts and wilful jealousy.
>
> MASSINGER.

THE arrival of Mrs. Delafield, her school-girl daughter, and two yahoos of sons, wrought no change in the discomfort of his feelings. There was nothing in his sister's society to obviate the loneliness of his heart, or supply the vacancy caused by Arabella's departure for Yorkshire with her husband. It is true the widow often tried to comfort him with an assurance that Collingbury had a very bad opinion of Lady Wellwood's constitution, and that the chances of survivorship were

all in his favour; but she never failed to add, that perhaps, after all, the irritation of Henrietta's ill-health might have had some share in stimulating the irritations of Henrietta's ill-temper. Poor dear Mrs. Delafield cherished the homely, but most authentic doctrine, that much of the misery of the human mind arises from the body,—and the larger portion of domestic uneasiness, from undenounced dyspepsia. Goose as she was, she was wise enough to know that half the virtues of our nature depend on the soundness of our digestion.

However anxious to bear her brother company in his solitude, the attractions of Sir Jacob soon magnetised her back to Mortlake; and though her visit was followed by those of an infinite variety of guests; though a succession of country neighbours, brother officers, and brother fox-hunters, crowded the Abbey,—Sir Henry found it impossible to create to himself a factitious interest in the scene. To him, all was vexation of spirit—all weariness—all desolation. The continent was not then, as now, open as a refuge for the sorrowful or sinful of Great Britain. People were obliged to remain at home, and chew the cud of their griefs, or bear the brunt of their errors. But for Arabella's entreaties, he would have solicited a staff appointment, and returned to the Peninsula;—but for Roddington's imploring face, he would have consigned the Abbey to dust and darkness, —the spiders and the tax-gatherers,—and pitched his lonely tent by the side of a happier stream than the waters of the Trent.

At Christmas, he made his escape to Allstone Hall; at Easter, he flew to London. A metropolis is, after all, the best retreat for persons struggling against mental vexation. The definition of Paris as "the spot of all others where we can best dispense with happiness," is applicable, in a comparative degree, to every great city. In town, people are too busy with their own affairs to be inquisitive or commentative on those of other people. Not a soul at Brookes's cared whether or why Sir Henry Wellwood was separated from his wife; not a woman at Almack's was at all curious to inquire if he regretted the former idol of his soul, or the impossibility of providing his soul with a new one. He re-appeared in society with some *eclat*, indeed, as a lion

from the walls of Badajoz. In those days, peninsular associations had not been guitarred into contempt. It was then the fashion of the fashionable to array themselves in Spanish brown; clasp their girdles with Barrosa eagles; and crowd round the annunciator of the last important victory, as if his despatch-box, like Pandora's, kept Hope a prisoner under its patent Bramah lock. Sir Henry was gratified, if not satisfied, to find his popularity considerable. He was as much courted in the great world as if the defunct Lady Mandeville's philippics had never upbraided him as a monster.

For the first week or two after establishing himself for the season, it was a matter of some doubt to him whether he had courage to hazard an encounter with Lady Wellwood, by venturing into the great world; and at one or two balls where he made his embrowned visage apparent, he certainly directed his eyes more anxiously and more frequently towards the door than was explicable on any other grounds but those of apprehension of her ladyship's arrival. He had summoned all his magnanimity in expectation of such an incident, by assuring himself twenty times a day that it would be much better they *should* meet at once, in order to prove to their friends that they were now as strangers, or that it was unnecessary to pay any particular regard to their enmities;—that although it was not desirable to invite them absolutely to dine at the same table, they might appear in the same ball-room without injury or annoyance to either. But all his philosophy was mustered in vain. Either at Sir Jacob Collingbury's suggestion, or from some equally rational motive, Lady Wellwood carefully abstained from the dissipation of the season; while his curiosity daily increased concerning her motives for seclusion.

At length, but not very satisfactorily, his mind was enlightened on the subject. One day as he was perusing the morning papers at Brookes's, his heart and soul engrossed by the details of the elevation of the *drapeau blanc* in the city of Bordeaux, he found himself familiarly tapped on the shoulder; and in the bloated, half-bald, but doubly whiskered dandy who had perpetrated the familiarity, he had no difficulty in recognising the expanded presence of Frederick Dornton!—His mar-

riage with Helena had long since set at rest all question of offence between them: nay, Sir Henry was aware that Dornton, at the period of their separation, had rather sought to pacify than foment the discord between himself and his wife.

"Ah! Wellwood, how—ā—ē?—glad to see you back again. Deucedly cut up, I perceive, by long marches and short commons,—breakfasting on a pair of stewed Hobys, and dining on a haunch of jackass. My dear fellow, I congratulate you on your return to a good dinner!"

"Thank you! From the accounts in to-day's paper, I am inclined to hope that our whole army may shortly indulge their patriotic predilection for roast beef."

"I'll hold you five to two that the Allies eat their dinner in Paris before this day month?"

"I never bet; but——"

"Upon my soul this crisis is inexpressibly awful," said Dornton, who had seated himself in an armchair, and was extending his rowly-powly limbs as far as they were stretchable. "Only conceive for a moment, my dear Wellwood, what it will be to have the continent thrown open again!—We of the present generation, for instance, have never *really* dined in our lives. I was but a lad at the peace of Amiens; but, by Jove! sir, had I entertained the slightest presentiment of the progress of public affairs, I would have run away from Eton, at the risk of expulsion, rather than forfeit my only chance of tasting a correct plate of soup."

"Surely there are plenty of good French cooks in London?"

"Ah! bah, bah, bah!—Science in cooking, my dear fellow, is like Burgundy,—it won't travel:—the bouquet evaporates. No genuine Frenchman can stand the fogs of this climate. I dined only yesterday with my brother Sandys, who bought off the Duke of Succulent's rascal Béchamel, by a deuced long annuity; and by Jove, sir, his *omelette souflee* was as heavy as his salary. The dinner might have been sent up by any John Smith or Dick Brown in the kingdom."

"Well, well!" said Sir Henry, rising to get rid of him, "for *your* sake I rejoice to perceive that Napoleon's day is done. Should peace be concluded, I shall

certainly be among the first to visit the French capital, where I trust to find you drowning all national animosities in a mess of pottage."

"I'm afraid I sha'n't manage to drown my wife in a mess of any kind. She's my worst animosity."

"Indeed! I fancied you a mirror of domestic happiness."

"A mirror?—yes!—and what is so easily broken?—You have the comfort of knowing Mrs. Frederick Dornton, and can therefore appreciate mine."

"Mrs. Etherington was rather the friend of—of—Lady Wellwood than mine."

"So I might have guessed by her fluency in traducing your wife. Oh! my dear Wellwood! how—how was it you so cleverly managed to get rid of your conjugal incumbrances?—For my part, I would give Mrs. Dornton any thing (except a handsome allowance) if she would live with me on the happy terms that prevail between you and her ladyship."

"Cannot you persuade some Miss Letitia Broadsden to come and make mischief between you,—and some exquisite Frederick to whisper resistance in her ear?"

"No one ever condescends to whisper in Helena's, unless it be the 'familiar toad' who squatted close at the ear of Eve. As to Letitia, ever since Lady Wellwood detected her misdoings and presented her with a *bouquet d'adieu*, she has carried herself and her five farthings per annum to Cheltenham, where there are always sick dowagers to be toadied."

"Lady Wellwood found her, perhaps, too observant a companion?"

"Too fond of circulating her observations."

"Yet I should have fancied her eternal tittle tattle, in a life of so much seclusion as Lady Wellwood's—"

"Seclusion?"

"She seems to have quite renounced the world. I have been every where and have met her no where."

"Perhaps Lady Wellwood might be tempted to define *your* every where *as* 'no where.' I suspect you have never yet found yourself included in *her* magic circle."

"I have never seen her, for instance, at Dorset House, or at Lady Armagh's."

"Westminster Hall, or St. Paul's cathedral! You don't fancy a woman of Lady Wellwood's high fashion would venture into such mobs as those?—You might as well expect to meet at a Sunday conversazione at the Marchioness's."

"I remember the time," said Sir Henry, very much affronted, "when Lady Wellwood considered herself fortunate in being distinguished by Lady Armagh's notice."

"Ay, ay! very likely;—that was when she was only the wife of a country baronet:—Dorset House, and the Armagh menagerie is always filled with such people!—Times are altered now; Lady Wellwood is become a *distinguee*. She would as soon think of attending a ball at the White Conduit House as at the common run of Lady So-and-sos with whom it may suit you and me to associate."

Sir Henry looked fierce; but in his anxiety to learn something authentic of his wife and her proceedings, contrived to tame down his indignation.

"Lady Wellwood, my dear fellow, is one of the Etherials,—quite a *petit comite* goddess;—probably has not dined for years at any table where more than eight guests are admitted, or been at a party which might not be held in her own boudoir. Nothing can be more refined than the shrine at which she is worshipped. By Jove, sir, I don't believe a woman in London is so much admired as your wife."

"Like the oracles of old, she seems to derive much of her importance from judicious mystery. At least, I shall be spared an encounter with a person so distinguished and distinguishing;—probably we shall never meet again."

"Your orbits are certainly very different, but do you know Lord Ragley?"

"A—a—no! He is separated from his wife, I think?"

"From *his*, but not from yours;—Lady Wellwood is the idol of the Ragley set. And perhaps you are acquainted with the young Duke of Durham?"—

"A—a—I rather think not; he is just come of age?"

"I don't fancy Lady Wellwood ever considered him in the minority. He follows her about like a pet spaniel."

"This is the first I have heard of it," cried Sir Henry, piqued into frankness, "surely it is not much talked of?"

"*Talked* of?—Oh no;—it is only such people as your Armaghs and Dorsets who get gossiped about in the newspapers and the coteries. Your Ragleys and Durhams are personages far more occult; *they* are never heard of by ears profane. *That* is one among many advantages of the *petit comites.* I should not be half so anxious to get rid of Mrs. Dornton, only I want to creep out of the populace of Armaghites, and *in* to the select vestries: there you have the best eating, the best talking, and the best company, on the easiest terms."

"I should have fancied the former would suffice you," said Sir Henry, glancing at the bloated rotundity of his companion.

"The eating?—oh, ay?—but I never thoroughly enjoy a good dinner, unless while I feed I have a clever man or two to listen to, and a pretty woman or so, to look at. You have no notion what flavour Lady Wellwood's blue eyes impart to a cutlet at Durham's."

CHAPTER XV.

Consideration like an angel came,
And whipp'd the offending Adam out of her;
Leaving her body as a Paradise
T' envelop and contain celestial spirits.

SHAKSPEARE.

But enough of clubs and battles, despatches and bills of fare. We have loitered too long with the heroes of our tale, considering that its heroine was left in the unsatisfactory predicament of a visit to Sandgate,—in company with Lady Mandeville and Miss Broadsden, an asthmatic poodle and a cockatoo.

It is not to be imagined that such companionship was particularly pleasing to a person of Lady Wellwood's

vivacious temperament; (is not that the circulating library designation of a high temper?)—or that the excess of sycophancy with which she was assailed by Letitia, could fail, after the lapse of a certain number of months, to nauseate her palate. There is an acme when even exaggeration becomes at fault. After Sir Henry Wellwood had been fairly or unfairly established as a Monster, it was very difficult to vary the shades of his monstrosity into deeper turpitude. He could be proved nothing worse in the gradation of crime, unless a thief or an incendiary; and Miss Broadsden did not exactly wish her accusations to extend to felony.

In the first fermentation of her fury, Henrietta had, it is true, been well pleased to secure so warm a partisan, in order to hear her husband unceasingly reviled as the worst of human kind; but

surfeiting,
The appetite did sicken, and so die!—

She grew weary of the cuckoo song of the parasite; and long before Lady Mandeville

surfeiting,
Of lampreys stewed, did sicken, and so die,—

had made up her mind to play the hunted beaver with Miss Broadsden; present her with an annuity, and get rid of her society. While Sir Henry was storming the bastions of Badajoz, Henrietta was braving the domestic storm of this second separation; a *separation de corps et de biens* from Letitia the long-nosed.

No sooner was "the mildewed ear" removed from its "wholesome brother,"—no sooner did Lady Wellwood, who was already secured by the decree of nature from the evil precepts of her aunt, throw off the pernicious influence of Miss Broadsden's presence, than she began, by slow and painful degrees, to discover how grievously she had trifled with her own happiness and respectability. Now that the chorus of spinsters and dowagers was out of hearing,—now that Helena was busy in venting her malicious sneers upon her new husband instead of her old friend,—now that the dandy had

manœuvred himself into Mrs. Etherington's jointure, and the toady into a welcome addition to her modicum, —now, in short, that the perverse wife was at a distance from bad advisers and bad advice,—she saw that she had been duped, miserably duped, not only by mischievous friends, but by her own bad temper. She could scarcely believe, as she wandered meditating along the sea shore, that she had suffered the waywardness of a moment of spleen to sever her from the man who loved her, the man she loved;—to expose *his* life to the fatal chances of war, and her own peace of mind to the fatal certainty of endless irritation. Restless and unhappy, she recalled the days of her Tunbridge sensibilities, of her courtship, of her wedlock; the happy period when her smiles and tears were watched by the eye of affection, as if emulating the importance of some heavenly dispensation; when a shade of care appeared upon her brow only to be dispelled by the tenderest soothing; when an implied wish was obeyed as the most peremptory of commands.

But this was not all. These reminiscences might have arisen from the same peevish selfishness that actuated her dissensions with her husband; and Henrietta was already swayed by a higher—a nobler influence.

To every uncorrupted mind, the lesson afforded by its first contact with mortality—its first insight into the appalling realities of the shroud, the bier, the funeral trappings, the yawning sepulchre—is inexpressibly awful; but with the vain and frivolous, the force of contrast redoubles the shock. Until she hung in contrition over the coffin of her flighty, worldly-minded aunt,—until the chill earthiness of Lady Mandeville's brow palsied her very heart as she imprinted a farewell kiss upon the dead,—the terrors of the grave, the responsibilities of eternity, had never assumed their true importance in her eyes:—they had danced before her imagination without arresting the trivial courses of her career. The heiress,—the courted, the beautiful heiress,—dreamed not of the worm and the dust; the bride,—the lovely, flattered, worshipped bride,—had not a thought for the all searching tribunal of God. But the hour of warning came at last:—and now, like Felix, she trembled, rebuked by the revelation of a judgment to come!—

We are taught to believe that in fear is the beginning of wisdom; and it soon became evident that the transition in Lady Wellwood's mind from terror to repentance, from repentance to penitence, from penitence to amendment, was sure without being slow. A very cursory inspection of her own heart, proved it to have been ungrateful, hard, proud, and selfish. She saw that her past life had been brightened with the favour of Providence, and that she had rendered back a curse for every blessing;—that she was responsible for the wretchedness of the husband she had sworn to honour, and for neglected duties beyond her own powers of computation.

It was fortunate for Lady Wellwood that at so critical a moment of her life, she did not fall into the hands of fanatics. It is from spiritual ignorance and self-abasement such as hers, the Joanna Southcotes and Edward Irvings mould their disciples; and it may be considered a farther illustration of the auspiciousness of her destinies, that her devotion carried her no farther than the orthodox altar,—her contrition of soul no higher than an humble and sincere desire for the fulfilment of her duties. The time she had hitherto wasted was now devoted to the improvement of her mind;—the fortune she had hitherto squandered, to the cause of humanity. While her husband was exposed to the perils of the peninsular struggle, she could not endure to mingle with the gaudy mob of London society; and accordingly purchased a villa at Putney, limited its circle of guests to the estimable and enlightened; and although, as described by Dornton, courted by the adulation of all the most distinguished members of the great world, admitted their influence sparingly, and enjoyed their diversions, like Lady Grace in the play,—"soberly."

Time, we know, does wonders; and habits of reflection confirm the miracles wrought by its schooling. The more Henrietta meditated on what she was and what she might have been, the more firmly established in her mind became the conviction of her own unworthiness. Satisfied that she had irrecoverably alienated the tenderness of her husband, the esteem of his sister, she still resolved that the measure of *their* excellence should be the standard of her own improvement. Grateful to

Heaven that, though divided from the husband of her choice by the self-sought barrier of a separate maintenance, she was, at least, safe from the evil fortunes that had befallen the crafty Helena in becoming the wife of the profligate Dornton;—that though an object of scorn to the family of Sir Henry Wellwood, she was still surrounded by admiring friends and attached dependants,—still young, still healthy, still prosperous enough to dispense the blessings of prosperity to others,—she now experienced no earthly anxiety except for the fate of the man her own perverseness had driven into exile.

However disposed to shun the brilliant uproar of London dissipation, Lady Wellwood did not affect to court a sullen seclusion; but in the choice of new connexions, and selection from her old, nothing could be more remarkable than the preference she unconsciously betrayed for such persons as were deeply interested in the fortunes of Wellington's army; and for that ministerial circle which was secure of the earliest intelligence. Many a time did Henrietta array herself with trembling hands for a dinner party, where she was invited to meet some horse guards' official or cabinet dignitary; many a time, after a night passed in sleepless terrors, did she drive into town, and appear among the loungers in the Park, solely with a view to gather from its rumours some tidings of the progress of the war. While Mrs. Allstone was besieging the antechambers of the Duke of York, on occasion of the blundering despatch already adverted to, Lady Wellwood was on her knees in the solitude of her own chamber, beseeching Heaven with uplifted hands for him she imagined gone for ever.

It may be doubted whether any wife, mother, or daughter, of the thousands to whom the issue of that fatal struggle was as the fiat of their destiny, experienced deeper anguish of mind than preyed upon the health and happiness of the admired Lady Wellwood. While Sir Thomas Riddlesworth, and several other men of distinction, to whom the young, beautiful, and opulent Henrietta afforded at once an object of adoration and speculation, turned their investigations with singular anxiety towards the columns of the Gazette, the alienated wife,—whose separate maintenance was supposed to estrange her from all interest in her hus-

band's destinies,—watched over the ominous record with an intensity of dismay beyond her fortitude to bear.

Sometimes, indeed, the delay of despatches after the vague rumour of an engagement in which she knew his brigade must be included, aggravated her terrors almost to a degree of insanity. Other women were at liberty to seek consolation for their sorrows, other wives to display their eagerness for intelligence. But dreading the evil interpretation of society, or rather cherishing at the bottom of her soul that miserable pride, that false shame which is the worst enemy of human virtue,—she felt it necessary to conceal her tears; to go about with a smiling countenance when her heart was distracted; to rush into society when solitude and silence would have been her chosen solace. At such moments, and during the suspense of an expected battle, she sometimes resolved to write to Sir Henry,—to implore his forgiveness, acknowledge her fault,—and solicit one affectionate word of farewell, lest he should go down to the grave with a heart hardened against her. She would have given worlds but to touch the hand she had thrown from her with disgust;—for a glance—for a smile—from those beloved and loving eyes which she knew had looked upon her for the last time. To think of him—of her own Wellwood—exposed to the perils of the sword; wounded,—dying,—dead;—returned to the common dust, with the blood-saturated clay of a foreign country stamped in upon his mangled face!—And to feel that he had expired in the belief of her abhorrence,—of her enmity;—it was too much!

But when the day of safety came again,—when the lofty tale of Badajoz, Ciudad Rodrigo, or Salamanca, bore the name of Sir Henry Wellwood recorded in the scroll of triumph instead of included in its fatal chronicle, when Henrietta's heart began to sing for joy, and her whole frame to tremble with the rapture of release from her terrors,—she relapsed into deference to the world's opinion;—persuaded that a woman who has demanded and obtained a separation from her husband, is as much severed from his interests as if the grave already divided them. She felt that she should be un-

justifiable in exposing herself to his contempt by any appeal to his tenderness.

Under these circumstances, it may be imagined what consternation was excited in the soul of Lady Wellwood by the first telegraphic intelligence of the mighty triumph of Vittoria:—what rapture—what ecstasy—by the knowledge that Sir Henry himself was not only safe, but the herald of that glorious victory. For many hours she could not sufficiently recover her self-possession to quit her own chamber; for many more she could not dismiss from her lips "the one loved name" so deeply connected with her past alarms, her present exultation. But it was enough;—he was safe;—his regiment already on its passage home:—his immediate connexion with the army dissolved. She should at length have leisure to be happy;—to eat, drink, sleep, and breathe the breath of existence, secure from that frightful sword of Damocles so long suspended over her head.

The next day, however, her emotions were of a less cheering nature. The flush of triumph had faded from her cheek; and on perusing in the newspapers various details of "the gracious notice bestowed by the Prince Regent on the gallant Sir Henry Wellwood;" "the prolonged audience granted to Lieut. Col. Sir Henry Wellwood by His Royal Highness the Commander-in-chief;"—"the cheers of the populace assembled round the hotel selected by the gallant officer for his residence,"—she could not but feel with humiliation that every hand in the metropolis was outstretched towards the harbinger of national triumph, excepting the one which had been pledged to him at the altar. Other eyes might gaze upon him,—other hearts avow the anxieties they had undergone for him during his absence;—she alone must remain silent, and cold, and neglectful!

Then came the announcement that "Lieut. Col. Sir Henry Wellwood had devoted the morning to an interview with a near relative at Mortlake;" and last and worst, at the conclusion of a week, some of the caterers for public curiosity thought fit to regale their readers with a "curtailed abbreviation" of the life of the newly arrived aide-de-camp. "Lieut. Col. Sir Henry

Wellwood, Bart.," said the paragraph which unwittingly planted thorns in her bosom, "entered the army in the year 1802, and is now in his thirty-first year. He succeeded to the Baronetcy on the 3d of December, 1808, on the demise of his brother Sir Rupert; and was married on the 16th of October, 1809, to Henrietta, only daughter of the late John Conybeare Atterfield Broughton, Esq., formerly Member of Parliament for the borough of Tewkesbury; from whom he was separated in the course of the following year. Sir Henry having no issue by his lady, the hereditary estates in Staffordshire will devolve, in case of her survival, to a distant relative,—Cockayne Wellwood, Esq., of Workington, in the county of Flint."—Poor Lady Wellwood!—she had very little doubt that this unpleasing notice would meet the eye of her husband; and serve to remind him of her existence by associations of the most galling and bitter nature.

CHAPTER XVI.

What did he when thou saw'st him!—What said he?—How looked he?—Wherein went he?—What makes he here?—Did he ask for me?—Where remains he?—How parted he with thee?

As You Like It.

For many weeks after this interesting event, Lady Wellwood secluded herself in her own home; and desisted from her usual equestrian exercise, lest in the course of her morning's ride she should encounter Sir Henry making his way (according to the indication of the newspapers) to inquire after the widowed patient of Sir Jacob Collingbury, and find it impossible to repress those emotions which the unexpected sight of her husband must naturally produce.

The same motive induced her to refrain from all eve-

ning society; and instead of the cause invented by the dandy, Dornton, to account for her absence, (the super-refined fastidiousness of her connexions in the great world) it was the delicacy of her feelings alone which prompted her scrupulously to elude all occasion of finding herself in his presence. Instead of yielding to the entreaties with which she was continually assailed to appear at such a ball, or adorn such a dejeuner, she pleaded indisposition and Collingbury, as an excuse for staying at home; till, at length, after wearying her friends with apologies and her acquaintances with negatives, she acquired the odium of being a decided invalid. Others, the less charitable, suggested that perhaps, her conscience forbade her to run any risk of a casual encounter with her husband; and Lady Wellwood, on observing that she was now frequently omitted from the invitations to the fêtes of the season, began to fancy that Sir Henry's return and influence operated to her disadvantage. He, perhaps, made it a condition of *his* acceptance that Lady Wellwood's presence should be dispensed with.

The same source of intelligence which acquainted her with his arrival, at length, satisfied her of his absence from town. The newspapers duly set forth his progress from Allstone Hall to Wellwood Abbey; and she had the satisfaction of discovering that all her tremours, and fears, and anxieties, had been lavished in vain; that while she had been fancying her husband the ornament of every ball-room in town, he was vegetating in Yorkshire with Tom and his wife. Her cheeks tingled at the mere notion of all that would probably be said of *her* in such a circle. She knew how thoroughly the bluff fox-hunter despised her flashy levity, her selfishness, her superficial glitter of fashion: and was satisfied that Arabella (even if she displayed the magnanimity of pardoning every harsh offence against herself) could regard her only as the rock against which her brother's happiness was wrecked for ever. The conscious Henrietta had long opened her eyes to the superiority of Mrs. Allstone's character; to her feminine gentleness, her prudence, her firmness, her tender regard for the kind and considerate Henry, who had protected her against the contumelious disdains of the

world. But she did not conceive her sister-in-law to be wholly and entirely an angel; and was apprehensive that though so good a Christian, she must look on Lady Mandeville's niece with sentiments far short of her profession. Often, during the vicissitudes of Sir Henry's campaigns, had she longed to address her with entreaties for intelligence of her husband. But her pride revolted against such an act of humiliation: she could not endure the thought of the triumphant peals of laughter which would burst from Tom Allstone on such a termination to her heroics!

However disagreeable, however dreary might be the autumn and winter passed by the baronet in Staffordshire, that which awaited the idol of his soul at Myrtle Bank was little less tedious. Poor Sir Jacob Collingbury was perplexed in the extreme by the headachs and tics he was called upon to cure; and never failed to inform Mrs. Delafield, in his daily round of visits, that her sister-in-law was "enjoying" a most wretched state of health. On this hint, Mrs. D. wrote into Yorkshire, that "poor dear Collingbury really did not exactly know what to make of Lady Wellwood;" and Tom having responded to the announcement, that the quack would, at least, make a deuced good job of her, took an early opportunity to insinuate to Sir Henry, that death and the doctor would probably soon rid him of his domestic plagues.

Henrietta was, in fact, labouring under excessive irritability of the nervous system, produced by prolonged uneasiness of mind; whereas, "poor dear Collingbury," having no mind of his own, and being consequently slow to suspect its influence over the health of others, was the last man to attribute the existence of physical ailments to moral causes. He could not conceive how heart-burn and indigestion could proceed from the softer sensibilities of the heart. At length, alarmed by Lady Wellwood's pallid looks and failing strength, he ordered his fair patient to Bath. But after a six weeks' sojourn among gouty admirals and nabobs, the alarming boldness of Miss Letitia Broadsden's attempts to re-enter her household drove her back to town, and she was next packed off to Leamington; where Frederick Dornton's hunting quarters being unluckily established for

the winter, she found herself incessantly called upon to mediate in those domestic squabbles, which the ill conduct of the husband and the ill temper of the wife rendered a daily and nightly recreation.

Harassed and discontented, Henrietta returned once more to Myrtle Bank. There, at least, she was able to pursue those favourite occupations which tended in a great measure to divert the uneasy current of her thoughts. She grew ashamed of seeing herself so wan and thin; and apprehensive that some person, more perspicacious than Sir Jacob Collingbury, might stumble on the true origin of her illness, and betray her to the world as pining in secret over the destiny her own levity and obstinacy had provoked. Trembling at the idea of being pointed out as still under the influence of attachment to her own husband, she determined to resume her place in society; to regain her footing in the great world; to re-assume the satin robe, the sparkling tiara, and appear among the illuminated halls of fashion, with a smile on her lips, and Sir Thomas Riddlesworth at her feet.

But fight as resolutely as she may against a betrayal of her feelings, no woman is able to disguise the traces of real sensibility. In spite of herself, the cheek *will* flush, the lip *will* quiver; the ear becomes estranged, the eye wanders with a restless and mournful expression. Yet never had Henrietta appeared in the eyes of the world more touchingly beautiful than during that critical spring of 1814; when every word spoken by English lips was gratulatory or triumphant, and every mind warmed into enthusiasm. The delicacy of her health imparted unusual elegance to her figure and complexion; and wherever she appeared, feelings of the deepest interest were excited in her favour. Often did it chance to Sir Henry Wellwood to enter a ball-room where her recent presence afforded a theme for universal admiration; often, very often, did he hear her named by strangers as the loveliest among the lovely:—but by some lucky providence the husband and wife never actually found themselves in each other's society.

Mean while, both were at least secure from all comment and inquiry touching their relative position and mutual sentiments. Now that Aunt Mandeville's ex-

position of the wrongs of her niece were silenced, and with it the echoes of the tabby coterie in which she had vegetated, no one presumed to investigate the amount of disgust lavished by the beautiful Lady Wellwood on the man whose existence prevented her from being the beautiful Lady Riddlesworth, and dame-consort of the finest domain in the three Ridings. Of the ancient spinsters, maimed, halt, or blind, who had witnessed the bitterness with which Lady Mandeville descanted on the enormities of a man who preferred his natural sister to his natural wife, and would not allow her unfortunate niece to visit a dying relative,—few were still extant. Among the coteries of May Fair, the bat's wing of oblivion is perpetually sweeping out all traces of the past. At the expiration of a year or two, people are very apt to mismatch and confound the offenders in a domestic quarrel; and to forget, like Lear, "which is the justice,—which the thief!"

But even with the surviving dotards of the tribe, Henrietta held little communication. She was now fortunate in the intimacy of a family who had never communicated with Aunt Mandeville's gossiping crew; and who, without having insulted her by inquiries on the subject, entertained a very accurate notion of the state of her feelings towards Sir Thomas Riddlesworth and his Yorkshire estates.

Mr. Bagot and his two daughters had first introduced themselves to Lady Wellwood, at the moment when the sudden death of her aunt, while sojourning at Hastings for change of air, left her in a painful and harassing predicament. Harriet and Sophia Bagot had met her sufficiently often in the circles of the beau monde to authorize them in offering their services in such a season of distress; services which were not only accepted and gratefully acknowledged, but allowed to form the foundation of a lasting friendship. Henrietta was eventually induced to remove to London with her gentle neighbours of the Marine Parade; and become their permanent neighbour, by the purchase of a villa called Myrtle Bank adjoining their own residence at Putney.

West Hill, Mr. Bagot's mansion, though illustrated by a less euphonious name, faced with red brick instead of white stucco, and overgrown with clipped phylle-

rea instead of the *rosa multiflora*, was also denominated a villa—after its kind; a villa of the olden time of the Lady Bettys, and Will's Coffee House;—and though its shrubberies were formal and ill-planted, they were at least serviceable in forming a rich back-ground to the American Gardens of Myrtle Bank. The premises were, in fact, only divided by a wooden paling; and there were very few days of the year in which Henrietta's nervous headachs were not assuaged either by the playful sallies of Sophy Bagot, or the milder counsel of her sister. She was sincerely attached to both; and while the peculiar nature of her situation debarred her from unreserved confidence with any human being, the fatherly and sterling character of Mr. Bagot commanded more of her respect, and the warm affectionate nature of the girls more of her interest, than she was disposed to lavish on any other individuals unconnected with the name of Wellwood.

The proprietor of West Hill was in truth a man whom to know was to honour. Distinguished, even among the scientific, by the eminence of his learning and the value of his discoveries in several of those useful arts which are cherished in the cradle of science,—he was the most benignant, the most gracious, the most cordial of earthly creatures. He had never been known to testify a harsh feeling even to those fashionable triflers whom he regarded as the most useless, and consequently the most contemptible insects of the creation; while to his daughters and their friends (and more particularly to their friend the beautiful Lady Wellwood) he was at once the sage preceptor, and cheerful companion. He, alone, had noticed in Henrietta the corroding influence of a secret sorrow; he alone had detected the disquietude of her bosom, and ventured to suggest that Collingbury and his nostrums were only aggravations of the mischief. Mr. Bagot's knowledge of her domestic position consisted indeed, solely, in the assertion of a certain Hastings Collingbury, derived perhaps from his defunct patient Lady Mandeville, that Sir Henry Wellwood was a barbarous monster, from whom her niece had been compelled to demand a separate maintenance, in order to escape from a series of unheard-of domestic persecutions; and albeit he con-

ceived that it must have been somewhat difficult to play the tyrant towards a being so fair and gentle as the Henrietta of Myrtle Bank, he entertained no doubt that the Henrietta of Wellwood Abbey had been the most injured of women.

So innocent a sufferer could not be supposed to cherish very forbearing sentiments towards the brute, (half squire, half-soldier,—whole Baronet) by whom she had been alienated from the sweeter ties of life; and the old man was accordingly led to surmise that her unacknowledged sorrows must be connected with an unfortunate attachment in some other quarter,—an attachment rendered culpable as well as hopeless by the indissoluble nature of her matrimonial engagements. It was impossible to withhold his sympathy from a young and lovely woman thus perplexingly situated; more especially as her conduct was a model of discretion,—her life a lesson of purity. He saw that Riddlesworth was by no means the favoured man; but had never yet been able to detect, among the gallant knights professing open adoration of his interesting neighbour, the unfortunately fortunate individual, whose attractions had been the means of necessitating Henrietta's trial of the Bath waters,—and the morning, noon, and nightly arrival of baskets full of pink camphorated draughts from the laboratory of Sir Jacob Collingbury,—by the currency of which that gentleman's senna coloured chariot was kept afloat.

From the month of June, 1813, when Mr. Bagot, at the suggestion of his daughter Harriet, made his way through the blossomed shrubberies of Myrtle Bank, to forewarn their nervous proprietress that the hero—"the monster,"—had once more set foot in England, to the month of June, 1814, when heroes became as plenty as blackberries, the old man fixed a vigilant eye upon her decaying health and failing spirits; noting with serious anxiety the state of hypochondriacism into which she was gradually sinking. It afforded him a solitary grain of comfort, amid all the tumult and disorganization consequent on the heromania at that epoch epidemic in the land, that his fair neighbour would probably be drawn into the vortex; and lose the sense of her private vexations, in the contagious enthusiasm of national triumph.

At length the momentous seventh day of June, eighteen hundred and fourteen, and several yachts freighted with sovereign princes, arrived together. Again the cannons roared, the bells rang, the flags waved, the people shouted. The whole population issued forth by common accord into the streets;—the Dover road became a living thing;—and an unbroken surface of human heads covered the earth from the Elephant and Castle to Piccadilly.

But Mr. Bagot had very shortly the disappointment of perceiving that Lady Wellwood, instead of following the general example, and flinging herself into the arms of old Blucher, or at the feet of young Alexander, pursued her accustomed avocations in undisturbed equanimity. While the common herd was bellowing forth its rapture at Ascot races, or the uncommon herd lisping forth its extasies at the King's Theatre, to hail the urbanity of an Imperial salutation or the trimliness of an Imperial waist, *she* sat unmoved at her easel completing a likeness of his younger daughter. Instead of seizing the opportunity of effecting a royal conquest by appearing at Lady Cholmondeley's ball, or Lady Salisbury's party, she remained quietly at home, swallowing Collingbury's decoctions and eschewing the philtres of vanity. While Harriet Bagot followed the regal cortege in an aquatic expedition to Greenwich, that restored to Father Thames his days of Elizabethan splendour,—and Sophy followed the multitude to St. Paul's Cathedral, to witness, in company with half the Chamberlains and a quarter of the crowned heads in Europe, the touching spectacle of a congregation of thousands of infants fed and clothed by the hands of Mercy,—Henrietta was taking her morning walk in her quiet shrubberies; listening to the linnets, and admiring the golden festoons of its laburnums.

It was in vain that her lovely friends sought to inspire her with some share of their ardour, by describing the inspiriting animation of the throng from which she kept aloof. They painted in glowing colours the courteous graces of the "rugged Russian bear;" the air of stern abstraction supposed to mark the ever-present regrets of the Prussian king for the fair victim sleeping in the mausoleum of Charlottenburg. But she was not to

be tempted forth from her seclusion; and was at last obliged to hint to her energetic companions, that she could figure to herself the effect of a ball-room full of gold lace and embroidery or a theatre crowded by shouting enthusiasts, without the fatigue of encountering the tumult and pressure of an ungovernable throng.

Mr. Bagot now began to consider the case desperate. Although possessed in his sixty years of philosophy of an antidote against the delirium of the hour, he could not behold the unanimous insanity of the metropolis without wondering at the imperturbable self-possession of the beautiful recluse of Myrtle Bank; and forming an opinion that it would have been impossible for her to retain this unaccountable indifference to the united attractions of emperor, king, hetman, field marshal, and highnesses *ad libitum*, but for the all-engrossing autocracy of the unacknowledged sovereign reigning within her faithful bosom. Still anxious, however, to do his utmost in her behalf, he readily conceded to his daughters' wish, that he would join his entreaties to their own, and prevail on Lady Wellwood to become their chaperon at the ball about to be given by the members of his club, in honour of the Peace and its gallant originators.

"Here is little Sophy, my dear madam," said the indulgent father, having accompanied his girls to Myrtle Bank on their errand of invitation, "who (not content with dragging me to town this morning, that I might see her canter round a riding-school on Platoff's charger, for the amusement of half-a-dozen Don Cossacks,) must needs insist on my escorting her on Saturday to see the procession to the Guildhall dinner, and on Monday to witness the proclamation of peace. You must allow that I shall find it difficult to reconcile all these toils of pleasure with the duty of playing chaperon at the ball on Monday night."

"Papa is in hopes you may be persuaded to supply his place, by taking charge of us at White's fête," observed Harriet. "Indifferent as you are to all the nonsense that so engrosses us just now, he trusts you may still be induced to take compassion on his asthma, and relieve him from the necessity of encountering the atmosphere of a crowded ball-room."

"*Do* go with us, dearest Lady Wellwood!" cried

Sophia. "I shall be miserable unless you see the Emperor waltz. I assure you it is quite a different thing from our stupid tortoise-like Spanish drawl."

"I am truly grieved to refuse any request of yours," said Henrietta; "but the uncertain state of my health forbids me to profit by your kind——"

"Nonsense, nonsense!" interrupted the giddy Sophy. "Take my word for it, you are stronger and better than any of us; for *I* have a gnat-bite on my little finger, and Harriet suffered severely from a headach last Tuesday fortnight; while *you*——"

"Sophy, Sophy!" remonstrated her father.

"My dear papa, it is all that odious Collingbury's doing! Ever since Lady Wellwood gave up riding, to shut herself up in this boudoir with all these magnolias and gardenias and Sir Jacob's prognostications, she has been growing so thin and pale, that she will soon be able to perfect her chaperonship by playing the part of our grandmother."

"With all my heart, dear Sophy," said Lady Wellwood. "I will be as ugly and old as you please, provided always you will allow me to be as quiet and indolent as *I* please."

"No, no, no!" said Mr. Bagot, good-humouredly; "I cannot act as witness to a compact so disadvantageous to society at large. This beautiful lawn, and the river, and the flowers, and the birds, are doubtless very attractive; but to *you* I am inclined to address the quaint query of the poet:—

> Life's wholesome business this? Is it to bask i' the sun?
> If so, a snail were happy crawling on
> A southern wall.

"You *must* accept the ticket, dear Lady Wellwood, you *must* accept the ticket!" whispered Sophia, during her father's quotation. "My cousin Ingerfield will be *so* disappointed if you refuse to take charge of us!"

"And remember," observed Harriet, "how rare an opportunity this ball will afford for a *coup d'œil* of the most illustrious men in Europe,—all the potentates, statesmen, and heroes of the age."

Henrietta paused to meditate; but it was on the at-

tractions of a hero nothing more illustrious than a simple Lieutenant-Colonel of Hussars.

"You will go, then?" inquired Mr. Bagot. "Let me entreat you to oblige us all by saying YES!"

But Henrietta was spared the exhibition of her own infirmity of purpose, and denied the possibility of articulating "No!" Sophy Bagot threw her arms round the neck of her friend, and sealed her lips with a kiss of acknowledgment for her unexpressed compliance.

CHAPTER XVII.

> Let the pavilion over the Euphrates
> Be garlanded, and lit, and furnished forth
> For an especial banquet. At the hour
> Of midnight we will sup there.
>
> BYRON.

IT must be a difficult task for the *debutantes* of this present season, to figure to themselves, while gazing on the begrimed lilac-bushes and sooty elm-trees of Burlington House, the engrossing interest which, eighteen years ago, concentrated the whole interest of the fashionable world beneath their scanty foliage. At that period, when the now familiar haunt of Carlton Terrace was consecrated to gardens sacred and mysterious as those of the Alhambra or Fonthill, the Burlington greensward was converted by the vulgar machinery of floor-cloth, sail-cloth, and the cloth of gold, into a region of temporary enchantment, emulating the luxurious glories of Sardanapalus, or

> The golden prime
> Of great Haroon Al Raschid.

Where now the dingy sparrows build their nests, a temple of festivity, illuminated as if by fairy hands, and graced with buffets of sugared dainties such as even the

fastidious judgment of dear old Mrs. G——r pronounced inimitable, unfolded its attractions; while Niel Gow (the Paginini of the days of "Money Musk," and "Mrs. Macleod,") sent forth his inspiring strains, where the croaking rooks at present disturb the repose of the bachelors of Albany.

Perhaps a more brilliant scene never adorned the annals of dissipation, than the temporary rooms constructed in this saloon-lacking metropolis by the committee of Whites. The beautiful and illustrious of our own kingdom, excited to the utmost enchantment of their charms by the presence of all that was eminent in Europe,—our own sovereign retaining that regal dignity of aspect which threw the lighter graces of the Russian emperor, and the martial sternness of the Prussian king into the shade;—Platoff, with his barbaresque simplicity,—Blucher, with his rough and ready soldiership,—princes with the fame of generals, and generals with the air of princes;—in addition to a countless multitude of minor heroes, whose feats would have split the trumpet of fame in the powder-and-pig-tail days of Dettingen,—displayed a bright confusion of uniforms,—a sparkling galaxy of knightly orders,—a motley variety of rainbow-hued *cordons*. Stars and garters, crosses and crescents, badges of every chivalrous institution from the "Tower and Sword" of the Arctic circle, to the "Lion and the Sun" of the Torrid zone, brightened the radiant ball-room and the galleries draperied with fluted muslin. Royalty seemed multiplied on every side, as if by a complex lens. Highnesses, serene, royal, and imperial, were scattered in unheeded groups; while Castlereagh and Metternich stood laughing (in the sleeves of their court dresses) at the sight of their majesties, the royal puppets, whom it had long been their diplomatic pleasure to finesse upon the chess-board of Europe. But above all, the feeling of national triumph,—of the long-absent restored,—of the long-struggling and long-endangered, elevated for life—for immortality—upon the pedestal of renown, imparted a glow of gladness to every heart. In short, (oh, anti-climax!) Napoleon was at Elba, and the Emperor Alexander at Escudier's hotel!

Unfortunately, the beauties of that Brummellian day, are mothers to the beauties of this; though, fortunately,

many survive daughterless, to prose over the high breeding displayed by Miss R***n, when elevated by imperial preference above the impertinencies of etiquette; and the still more courtly, still more perfect elegance of one, who, leaning on the arm of an emperor, seemed born to be an empress; of one

> The glossy brightness of whose clustering hair,
> Which shades, yet shows the forehead yet more fair,

is still undimmed as when Byron hymned its lustre, and the autocrat confessed its charm. Many remember the clamours raised against the first dizzy bewilderment of the flying waltz of Tchernicheff,—many recollect the rivalship excited by the multiplied flirtations of the royal ogrelings of Prussia. It was, in fact, an era of magic wonders; and White's fête may be said to have constituted the master-spell of its necromancy.

Among the guests thronging to the illuminated vestibule, there was some perhaps who attracted louder notice or more illustrious homage than the fair group which, under the convoy of Lord Ingerfield, approached Sir George Warrender and Sir Richard Borough,—the stewards delegated to examine the tickets of the guests; but it was admitted by divers of the mustachioed princes ordered to attend on the occasion in all their orders, (till, as the "mighty Tom" expresses it,

> They looked like a house that is over ensured,)

that nothing could surpass the flaxen fairness of Sophy, the Grecian contour of Harriet, unless the seraphic air of their companion. The future king of Bavaria, already a sentimental poet worthy distinction in any almanack of the empire, protested that but for the diamond cestus distinguishing Lady Wellwood as the goddess of beauty, he should have mistaken the group for the three graces of England. He passed half the evening in hammering out a page of hexameters in their honour.

On entering the ball-room, she was fully prepared to meet the eye of her husband. She knew he was to be present, and had nerved herself for the effort; she had

even forewarned herself of the changes which vexation and toil and the tug of war, must have wrought in his aspect; for "the blue eye and sunken," bespeaking the evil influence of withered affections; for the grizzled beard betraying the severities of foreign service. What, therefore, was her surprise on glancing along the train of scarlet and gold, of glittering aiguillettes and waving feathers, following in the train of the Prince Regent, to notice a fine manly figure, a bronzed and animated countenance, a beaming smile that revealed a row of pearly teeth,—all most assuredly belonging to the monster of whose soul she had once been the idol!—Or what her consternation on seeing him bend with affectionate courtesy towards a lovely girl leaning upon his arm, and looking up in his face with a smile of uncontrollable admiration?—The spectacle imprinted itself vividly on her imagination; but when she looked that way again, all had become indistinct:—either her eyes were dim with tears, or the lamps burnt faintly in the ball-room.

A minute or two afterwards, Sophy was claimed as a partner by Lord Ingerfield, while Harriet was led to the dance by the Duke of Durham, one of the privileged donors of the fête. Lady Wellwood, ere she suffered them to depart, was anxious to attach herself to the side of some female friend; but just as she was moving towards Lady Sandys with the view of taking her arm, she found her own appropriated by Sir Thomas Riddlesworth; who, as a member of the committee, considered himself one of the heroes of the night. His first attempt to render himself agreeable, consisted in conducting her through the doorway in which stood her husband, pointing out to his lovely companion the different members of the Imperial group; and the Yorkshire Baronet being totally unacquainted with the person of the Baronet of Staffordshire, he naturally attributed the tremour with which Henrietta was seized to a fit of sensibility excited by his own attentions.

At supper (that supper so cruelly abbreviated to the gastronomes by the single draught of champagne and seltzer-water quaffed by the Imperial waltzer) the fair-haired beauty was seated next to the herald of the battle of Vittoria; and just as Lady Wellwood, who, in spite of Alexander, neither the great nor the little, but

the Mediocre, had supped full—(of horrors,) was trembling her way towards the carriage, guided by Riddlesworth and followed by the two Bagots and their partners, she was so unfortunate as to catch a glimpse of Sir Henry in the very act of presenting the new idol of his soul to the reigning idol of every body's soul,—that veteran hero, whose complexion resembled that of an old honey-combed field-piece,—Blucher Prince of Wahlstadt.

It was fortunate for Henrietta that from Piccadilly to Putney she was not required to utter a syllable. The wondering superlatives of delight and admiration that burst from the lips of Sophia, and even of the more sober Harriet, respecting the enchantments and brilliancy of the fête, spared her the humiliating discovery that her tears flowed unceasingly though silently through five turnpike-gates, between the *grande entree* which at that period clamoured for six-pences at Hyde Park Corner, and the swing-gate of Myrtle Bank.

She rushed into her own room;—she cast a hurried glance at the toilet-glass.—Alas! poor Hatty!—what had those swollen and penitent eyes to offer in competition with the blue Roman-candle-like radiance illuminating the sweet face of her younger rival;—what had those glaring diamonds, that gaudy exuberance of finery, to exhibit in comparison with the one white rose blooming amid the curls of Sir Henry Wellwood's new idol? She threw herself into a chair; and, in spite of her pride and her waiting maid, sobbed aloud for very wretchedness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The music and the banquet and the wine,
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers,
The sparkling eyes and flashing ornaments,
The white arms and the raven hair—the braids
And bracelets, swan-like bosoms, and the necklace
An India in itself, yet dazzling not
The eye like what it circled; the thin robes
Floating like clouds betwixt our gaze and heaven;
All the delusion of the dizzy scene
Its false and rare enchantments,—art and nature—
Are gone! BYRON.

WHEN Mr. Bagot made his appearance at Myrtle Bank in the course of the following day, to inquire after the health and strength of his fair neighbour, as well as into the accuracy of Harriet's report, that her cousin Ingerfield was certainly on the eve of a proposal to his pretty little fair-haired Sophy, he was delighted to find Lady Wellwood far more easily pursuaded to undertake the care of his girls at the masked fête about to be given by Watier's Club, than she had been to hazard an appearance at the White's Ball. It was indifferent to the good old man, whether her change of opinion arose from the natural versatility of her sex, or from the attractions of a species of amusement where

Though curious eyes may quote deformity
We look to beetle brows to blush for us.

She consented to bestow her matronly protection on his daughters,—and that was enough. But it was by no means indifferent to his benevolent heart to perceive, as Henrietta bent over a drawing she was finishing for Harriet's portfolio, that her face was paler than ever, and her hand more tremulous than seemed propitious to the perpendicular of the columns of her Pæstum Temple. He had seen much in the newspapers of the day, and heard more from his daughters, of the

sensation excited by Lady Wellwood's beauty at the entertainment of the preceding night; but he also heard, and with regret, that Riddlesworth had escorted her during a considerable portion of the evening. It was not that he feared for the prudence of his daughters' friend; his apprehensions solely regarded her peace of mind.

But her pale cheeks became flushed with excitement during the debates that ensued with Harriet and Sophia, touching their costume for Watier's fête; which, it was understood, would assume the tone of a fancy ball, rather than of a regular masquerade. The grave Harriet would not hear of any attempt to support a character, and Henrietta was averse to all attempts at display; it was therefore finally arranged that the two girls should appear in ball dresses of a somewhat fanciful kind, with a half mask; while Lady Wellwood took refuge in an elegant domino. During the ten days that intervened between the two balls, they had little leisure either for reminiscences or anticipations. Every day brought some new diversion:—a review, purporting to exhibit to the mighty Czar a miniature sample of the manœuvres he had lately practised on a scale that Xerxes might have envied;—or a formal breakfast, given as if purposely to curtail the precious moments devoted by the exotic Princes to the investigation of our national monuments. On more than one of these occasions, Lady Wellwood was again heart-stricken by a distant glimpse of her hero; still bearing on his arm, or escorting on horseback, his own particular heroine. Yet painful as was the spectacle, she admitted to herself that it was better to see him thus—smiling, healthful, happy,—than to endure the agonizing suspense by which she had been afflicted during his sojourn in Spain. She had long been aware that for *her* he had ceased to exist;—that the man whose name she bore, was more completely disunited from herself than any other living being;—and strove to persuade herself that to see him restored to the enjoyment and adornment of life, was some mitigation of her offences, some consolation to her sorrows. It was certainly rather singular that the consolation of her sorrow produced so many tears, so many sighs, so many nights of feverish restlessness!

Perhaps, on the whole, it was fortunate for her fame as a beauty, that the committee of Watier's decided on the assumption of "varnished faces" in their revels; for all these sighs, tears, and restless nights, whether consolatory or not, produced the natural effect of rendering her eyes hollow, and her nose red. She would have been invaluable to Guido Reni as a model for one of his Magdalens; but certainly fell far short of her usual charms as the belle of a ball-room. Yet so graceful was her person, her mien so dignified, her domino fitted and adjusted with such exquisite taste, and her hair, and the contour of her head remaining uncovered, so fraught with elegance, that even her youthful companions in their lighter robes, attracted far less attention among the brilliant throngs collected in the ball-room.

Occupying the same *locale* as the entertainment of the rival club, there was something original and piquant in the fanciful devices of Watier's fête, which formed an improvement on the pompous splendours of its precursor. The sovereigns were gone, indeed; with the exception of the Prince of Wirtemburg, playing the part of the Prince of Denmark in velvet and black bugles, not a remnant of the illustrious strangers remained. But a new lion was there in their place, whose single roar was fairly worth the whole chorus:—Wellington, the Great—*the unique*, then in all the untarnished glory of his seven-leagued boots. It was for *him* the people shouted now; it was for *him* the bells rang, and the streamers fluttered. It was on *his* brow that patriots and sages fixed their curious perusal, to detect the latent spark of genius, the glow of national pride; it was to *his* eye the blandishments of beauty were directed, and the devices of the night dedicated. For *his* amusement Mathews introduced a Yorkshire lout, in curious contrast with the diamonds and white satin glistening in the ball-room; for *him* Moore poured forth his stirring notes of inspiration; for *him* an ex-chancellor, the witty Erskine, attired as a gipsy vagrant, affected to interpret the shadows of futurity!—

A wider range was afforded to the eye than on occasion of the original entertainment; and among its blooming conservatories and sparkling temples, the majestic Countess of White's ball now smiled as the fairest of

flower-girls, Lady Heathcote as a peasant of the Alps, Lady Ossulston under the shade of a monastic habit. Gage Rookwood, then young and gay, illustrated the humours of a Grub Street poet; and Lady Mary, then slight and graceful, spread her silken wings as the delicate Ariel!—William Peel assumed the obstreperous tone of Mrs. Sneak; the gentle Skeffington the slang of a mail-coachman; and Douglas Kinnaird the divination of a fortune-teller. Here, a grove of illuminated palm trees brightened the scene; and there, the mimic shop of a lovely modiste put forth its attractions.

Commenting on the varied contrasts thus afforded, Lady Wellwood and Miss Bagot followed the guidance of Lord Ingerfield, on whose arm Sophy was leaning; when, just as they reached the archway communicating with the *allee verte*, a sudden rush towards the banqueting-room separated the little group; so that Henrietta and her elder charge were left alone in the crowd.

Already agitated by the apprehension (she herself could scarcely define whether it arose from hope or fear) of meeting her husband, Lady Wellwood was oppressed by sudden faintness from the flurry of the moment, and the pressure of the gaudy multitude.

"Harriet, Harriet!" she faltered to Miss Bagot, "I can scarcely support myself. Oh! that we could but meet with some friend to extricate us from this dreadful throng."

"Take off your mask," said Miss Bagot, who had already removed her own; "you will breathe more freely."

"No!" faltered her friend; "not for worlds. Why —why did I venture here!"

"If I might presume to offer my assistance," interposed a mask, in the picturesque costume of a pilgrim, whose russet weeds were entangled with Miss Bagot's draperies, "I think I could make way for you towards yonder window."

"Take his arm, dearest Harriet," whispered Lady Wellwood. "Quick,—quick! I can hardly stand."

"Your friend is indisposed," resumed the pilgrim, in that intense tone of voice which imparts dignity to the most trivial observation. "Shall I attempt to pass over and assist her with the support of my arm?"

"She will sink in this horrible crush, and be trampled to death!" cried Miss Bagot, trembling with consternation, when she perceived that her companion was no longer able to stand.

"Wellwood, my dear fellow!" said the courteous pilgrim, touching with the end of his staff an officer in regimentals, who stood a few paces in advance of the party, "help me to make way for a lady who is extremely ill. Stay,—give her your arm—quick!—she has fainted!" he continued, as Sir Henry Wellwood, turning round, received upon his bosom the falling figure of Henrietta. The crowd divided in a moment. It is strange that the densest crowd can always contrive to make room for a lady in a fainting fit. The doorway once passed, the path was clear; and hurrying along the circuitous passages with his inanimate burden in his arms, Wellwood and his companions soon reached a window open towards the gardens, calling loudly for a glass of water.—The Dean and his shovel hat would have been invaluable!—

Fortunately, Harriet Bagot had overheard the name by which her courteous pilgrim invocated the stranger; and instead of removing Henrietta's mask, as under ordinary circumstances she would have done, judged it wiser to trust to fresh air and iced water, and to get rid of Sir Henry before the perfect restoration of Henrietta's consciousness.

"We shall do very well now," said she, somewhat abruptly, while one or two of the female attendants of the refreshment-room hastened to her assistance.

The hint was instantly understood by the two strangers. "If we can be of any farther assistance,"—hesitated the pilgrim.

"Are you acquainted with Lord Ingerfield," said Harriet, addressing herself pointedly to Sir Henry. "You would greatly oblige me by informing my sister, who is with him, that we are anxious to return home as soon as possible."

"I wish I had the happiness of knowing his lordship by sight. Byron!—are *you* more fortunate?"—said Sir Henry, in a tone of good-natured concern.

"Allow me to go in search of him," said he, whose high pale brow and raven hair and characteristic coun-

tenance, were not then as now—a national possession—a pledge committed to the guardianship of Fame. "Ingerfield is an old Harrow friend of mine; I trust I may be able to discover him in the throng, and do your spiriting gently." And bowing gracefully to Miss Bagot, he strode away with a step that laboured to disguise the natural imperfection of his gait.

"Are you better now, dearest?" inquired Harriet of her friend, who was reclining in an arm-chair, and sufficiently recovered to press her hand in token of recognition.

"Much better," she faltered in a faint low voice, agonized by the dread that Harriet would address her by name, and betray her to her husband. But Miss Bagot had too much tact for any such blundering proceeding. She saw that Sir Henry Wellwood was safe from the most distant conjecture as to the identity of the lady in the gray domino; and that he was riveted to the spot by one of those inexplicable personal sympathies that speak with a still small voice, more impressive than the roar of the tempest.

"Surely it would be advisable to remove your friend's mask?" he now inquired of Miss Bagot.

"Impossible! It is fastened among the braids of her hair, and I should only harass her by the attempt. She is better now,—quite sensible!"—said Harriet, dismissing the attendants, who were in haste to tender their services elsewhere. "We will remain here quietly till Lord Ingerfield's arrival, and then return home."

She was in hopes the monster would profit by this intelligence, and retreat to the ball-room. But Sir Henry, whose fair-haired beauty was on this occasion absent, seemed in no hurry to desert his new acquaintance. Harriet was still engaged in fanning her silent friend; when having courteously announced his intention of guarding them till Lord Ingerfield's appearance, or at least till Lord Byron's return, he entered into conversation with Miss Bagot, with easy and graceful self-possession, on the subject of the fête, its objects, and attractions. Several minutes passed away—a quarter of an hour—half an hour;—no cousin Ingerfield—no pilgrim!—The monster and the monster's wife—the beauty and the beast,—were still sitting beside the open

window of the little vestibule looking out on the illuminated gardens, and conversing with the sudden familiarity that any extraordinary crisis tends to promote among strangers. Harriet was prompt to acknowledge the gratification she had experienced in even an accidental interview with the distinguished genius whose numbers were already the boast and admiration of his countrymen; and whose fame was yet untarnished by the excesses of his after years. From the poet to his poetry, the transition is easy. Sir Henry quoted with elegance, and criticised with ability, the verses of his gifted friend; and even the trembling Henrietta occasionally interposed a few admiring comments,—uttered in a voice whose hoarse and broken intonations were totally unrecognizable by her companions. Several times, Miss Bagot, sympathizing in the critical delicacy of her position—entreated their watchful guardian to release himself from his post; but he was so agreeable, and apparently so eager to execute the duties with which chance had invested him, that it was difficult to regret his obstinate adherence to their society. At length,—just as Sir Henry had begun reciting to the graceful figure in the gray domino (whose attention he was labouring to divert from her own indisposition) some exquisite verses, at that time still secure from public curiosity in Byron's note-book, Harriet caught a glimpse from the end of the corridor of the approaching figures of Ingerfield and her sister, whom she knew to be unacquainted with the person of Sir Henry. Flying towards them, she explained in a few hurried sentences the state of the case: forewarned them against all mention of the name of Wellwood, and so well succeeded in her manœuvres, that although Sir Henry contrived to appropriate to himself the office of conducting the interesting invalid to the carriage which was now brought to the door by Lord Ingerfield's interposition, he only ascertained from the servants that the equipage was that of a "Mr. Bagot, of West Hill, Putney;" and was left to the inference that the lady whose fine sentiments and fine person excited so much emotion in his bosom, was a Mrs. Bagot; —the mother, or grandmother, or sister, or uncle, or aunt, (or what on earth could she be)—to the Harriet who had so obstinately refused to remove her mask, and

the sweet Sophy who appeared so deeply concerned in her indisposition. Sir Henry returned to the dancing-room only to draw forth the irony of Lord Byron, by raving of the fascinations of the gray domino;—and went to bed and dreamed that the fainting lady was Leila, sewed up in a sack, and about to be drowned in the lake of Yanina;—and himself the Giaour, fighting valiantly in her defence in a white caftan and a pair of yellow morocco boots.

CHAPTER XIX.

La plupart des hommés emploient la prémière partie de leur vie à rendre l'autre misérable.

LA BRUYERE.

WEST HILL, Putney, was a large square brick house, standing on a naked lawn of the greenest and smoothest turf, sloping towards the Thames. Its tall iron gates and formal drive-in, were easily pointed out to Lieut. Colonel Sir Henry Wellwood, when, in his anxiety to inquire after the health of the three ladies, he ascended its lofty flight of steps on the day following the adventure at Watier's *fete;* and stood admiring the trim shapeliness of the two magnolia trees planted on either side the door. There was something rather repulsive in the old-fashioned stateliness of the spot. The butler, who presented himself at the glass-door, was a venerable gray-headed man, by no means likely to answer impertinent questions; the hall within was of dark-coloured oak, with a ceiling of Verrio's school, covered with sprawling gods and goddesses. He saw that it was no citizen's villa; that West Hill was a mansion in which Pope's Belinda might have paid morning visits, and the "charming Mary Montagu" flirted her fan. It was a redoubtable spot for an adventure of modern knight-errantry.

Sir Henry, mean while, contrived to make his inquiries after the ladies tolerably intelligible; and having learned from the old domestic that they had "just drove into town with his master," bravely demanded pen and ink, that he might leave his name. There cannot, by the way, be a better pretext (whether for lovers or swindlers) to obtain admission into a house and reconnoitre the premises, than to travel without a card-case. The old man looked hard at the fine blood-horse and respectable-looking groom in waiting on the anonymous stranger, and admitted him without hesitation. Having conducted Sir Henry across the damp, solemn, oaken hall, he now opened the door of the young ladies' morning room of which the folding windows stood open towards the pleasure-grounds, and brought forward a blotting book and inkstand.

But lo! while Sir Henry was inscribing his name with all that loitering interest in the spot which interest in the owner naturally imparts, the butler suddenly exclaimed,—"Ah! there is my lady crossing the shrubbery; I thought master had persuaded her to go with them, as she was so much better this morning;" and Wellwood instantly looking out, perceived the stately beauty of the gray domino sauntering languidly towards the-side. river Without stopping for a single inquiry, he snatched his hat, and with eager agitation made his way through the open window in the same direction. Her back was towards him;—but could he mistake that graceful waist,—that flowing outline?

On approaching the fair stranger, however, the awkwardness of his position induced him to slacken his pace. Might not his intrusion be accounted audacious? —It mattered not. He *must* see her,—*must* speak to her again; and not having been able to overtake "my lady" till she reached a low wicket-gate in the rustic palings of the shrubbery, did not hesitate to follow her into the flower-garden enclosed within.

It was with a start of nervous trepidation that Lady Wellwood turned towards him, on hearing herself stammeringly addressed by the gentleman who with his hat in one hand and a riding-whip in the other, had already reached her side; but it was with a start of far greater amazement, consternation, horror, and confu-

sion, that Sir Henry recognised in the heroine of the masquerade, and of West Hill, Putney, his own Henrietta,—the umqwhile idol of his soul!—

It was impossible to recede!—Some explanation was absolutely necessary; and having faltered out that "he feared there was some mistake,—that he had taken the liberty of intruding at Mr. Bagot's residence to inquire after a lady of the family who had been extremely indisposed at Watier's the preceding night," Lady Wellwood managed to stammer in reply, that *she* herself had been indebted to his services, for which she begged to offer him her thanks. "My friends, the Miss Bagots," continued Henrietta, gaining courage, "are gone with a gay party to Woolwich, to visit the Nelson previously to its launch; and I am just returned from witnessing their departure."

Notwithstanding the extreme embarrassment of both parties, there was nothing discourteous or discouraging in Henrietta's mode of address. Sir Henry felt it unnecessary to retreat with any remarkable precipitancy.

"I trust you reached home," said he, "without a recurrence of your illness? Those rooms were suffocating! Temporary rooms, which are so susceptible of ventilation, are usually more close and ill-managed than any others."

This was a fortunate topic. They managed to talk of temporary rooms, tents, marquees, ventilation, and Mr. Dudding's management, till both had pretty nearly overcome the palpitation, and flush, and confusion of mind and body, consequent on their mutual recognition. Lady Wellwood suffered most. Her sight grew indistinct; all the bright parterres of flowers bordering the shrubbery presented a confused glare. But she felt that her situation was critical;—that she should "mar all by starting;"—and exerted a woman's fortitude (a faculty beyond the dreaming of the schools) to retain the aspect of self-possession. By some happy inspiration she now hazarded an inquiry, of all others calculated to satisfy the perplexed Wellwood of the kindly nature of her feelings towards him.

"I hope Mrs. Allstone is well?—She has now, I think, two children?"—

"I thank you; my sister is quite well: she has a fine

boy, and a pretty little girl. Allstone is obliged to be a good deal in town for the house; but Arabella has only passed one season here since her marriage."

There was nothing very interesting either in the question or reply; yet the friendly spirit of the former, and the warm, affectionate, grateful tone in which the latter was uttered, spoke volumes. It was fortunate that they did so; for the parties were now within sight of the house,—the beautiful rustic villa covered with roses and clematis, which Lady Wellwood had done so much to embellish; and both her ladyship and Sir Henry felt that the moment of parting was at hand. Neither of them seemed inclined to accelerate their pace.

"I am glad to learn from my medical attendant," said Henrietta, hoping to avoid the awkwardness of a dead silence, "that Mrs. Delafield's health is so much restored."

"Yes!—she is now quite a robust woman," replied Sir Henry, glad of an occasion to speak cheerfully. "All her nervous whims and fancies have disappeared; and she is even able to accompany her daughter into society."

"Her daughter?"

"It is true Blanche is not quite seventeen, but the peculiar attractions of the present season have induced my sister to bring her out somewhat prematurely. She was thought one of the prettiest girls at White's."

Lady Wellwood's heart began to beat again. Dolt that she had been, not to recognise little Blanche of Tunbridge in the lady of the flowing ringlets!

"Mr. Dornton informs me," said Sir Henry, "that you never appear in crowded rooms, or I should probably have recognised you last night."

"I have not seen Mr. Dornton these two years," said Henrietta, coldly.

A pause ensued; both parties were growing nervous again. They were within twenty paces of the house; the perfume of the climbing flowers covering the rustic portico was already perceptible.—Nothing remained for them but to say "Good by!"

At that moment, a rough-looking terrier that was sleeping in the sunshine near the verandah, raised its head on the approach of footsteps; and suddenly changed

the stretching motion of lazy recognition with which it was beginning to notice its mistress, into one of those yelping, bounding, crouching, whining fits of ecstasy, with which a dog alone, of all animate things, contrives to make manifest the warmth of its welcome.

"Down, Tartar! down," cried Sir Henry, repressing the caresses of the enraptured brute, which was leaping almost into his face in the ardour of its demonstrations of joy.

"Down, sir!" echoed Henrietta, trembling at the inferences her husband might draw, on finding his old stable favourite established in her boudoir,—a far more precious pet than the Jessy of former times.

But Tartar obeyed his master's well-known voice only by crouching on the grass—his eyes fixed on those of Sir Henry, his tail wagging like the flyers of an engine. It was impossible to avoid stooping down to pat the head of the faithful beast. Neither Sir Henry nor Lady Wellwood recollected Argus and Ulysses,—they had no leisure to be classical: but when the Lieutenant Colonel raised his glistening eyes from Tartar's wiry white coat, he was agitated enough to venture on any thing.

"I fear," said he, in a somewhat broken voice, "that I must seem an intruder here. Believe me, I had no intention of trespassing on your retirement; and in taking my leave, permit me only to assure you of the sincere gratification it gives me to find you looking so well, and settled in a retreat affording you such neighbours as the young ladies who accompanied you last night."

Henrietta extended her hand to one of the rustic columns of the portico; but though she trembled, she had taken a stern resolution. "Since you *are* here," said she, "pray come and see my house. It is small;—not so much of a place as West Hill: but I prefer it for the summer season."

In a moment they had entered the folding windows of a beautiful little drawing-room, hung with draperies of the palest green silk, and fitted up with glossy white maple wood. There was no gilding, no Buhl, no costly Dresden, no or-moulu;—nothing on the tables but flowers and books, and a few antique vases pateræ of yellow marble and bronze:—nothing on the walls but a

little folding cabinet of miniatures, containing the picture of her parents, which he remembered in her dressing-room at the Abbey. An opening seemed, however, to have been made in the velvet, for the admission of a *third* portrait. But it was not Lady Mandeville;—no! it was a man,—a soldier;—and, unless the distance deceived him, attired in a uniform greatly resembling that of a field-officer of his Majesty's —th Hussars!—

Lady Wellwood now invited him to a seat, and down he sat:—still stunned and bewildered by his strange adventure, but sufficiently himself to notice the extreme beauty of a half-finished drawing that lay on a table-easel before him.

"Do not look at that," said Henrietta, blushing deeply; "it is a very poor affair,—intended only for my friend Harriet Bagot's portfolio."

"It is exquisite!" cried Sir Henry with enthusiasm. "You must have occupied yourself a great deal with drawing, to have attained this perfection. Blanche Delafield is considered to possess an extraordinary talent of this description. Her sketches are very fine;—I should like much to show you one,—to have your opinion,—to—"

Henrietta was too proud to save *his* pride; and fulfil his wishes by saying—"Pray bring me one to look at:" and perhaps it was this hesitation,—or perhaps the sudden entrance of a servant announcing "Sir Jacob Collingbury," which induced him to profit by the confusion of the little man's fussy entrée, make a low bow, and take his departure. The Doctor was no less amazed when he attempted to count the miraculous acceleration of her ladyship's pulse, than was her ladyship's footman on finding a tall handsome stranger established in her ladyship's drawing-room, who certainly had not entered by the door: and while Lady Wellwood was receiving grave assurances of the necessity of oceans of anodyne draughts for the tranquilization of her nervous system, Sir Henry hurriedly retraced his footsteps through the beautiful shrubberies, repassed the wicket-gate, the parlour window of West Hill, destroyed the "Sir Henr—" which still remained a mysterious fragment on Harriet Bagot's writing-table; and without summoning a servant or entering into farther explanations, re-

crossed the hall, descended the door steps, took his impatient horse from his patient groom, and was on the London road in a minute!

Mean while, the gray-headed butler of West Hill, who, on perceiving that his master's visiter was gone on a visit to Lady Wellwood, judged it unnecessary to mount guard till his return, and being too much of a dignitary to question the groom, (as either of the footmen would have done, had they been on the spot,) was now quietly employed spelling over to the lady's maid in the housekeeper's room, the account given in the morning papers of the masquerade of the preceding night.

"Ah! here's the young ladies' names at full length," said he, placing his spectacles more firmly on his nose. "The beautiful Misses Bagot," that's them!—and as sure as a gun, the young gentleman yonder has fall'd in love with them, and is now gone to ask my lady's assistance in his hovertures."

"Young gentleman yonder, Mr. Woolham? Where?"

"I'll go and inquire his name of the groom and horses!" said old Woolham, toddling through the offices towards the hall-door. But groom, horses, stranger,—all had disappeared; nay! even the few letters traced in the butler's presence on the quire of Bath hot-pressed, lying with its "virgin page, bright and unwritten still," on the library table.

It afforded some comfort to poor Woolham that Miss Harriet's gold repeater lay there also! But he soon decided that since the mysterious stranger was not a house-breaker, he could scarcely be less than the cloven-footed tempter of Dr. Faustus! The housekeeper's room congress, mean while, was of a contrary opinion. Miss Bagot's maid thought the great unknown must be some great man "what had fallen in love with her young lady at the ball, like the Prince in Cinderella:" and Miss Sophy entertained strong suspicions that he would turn out to be "no waiter, but a Knight Templar."

But the question did not appear likely to be speedily set at rest. Even when the Bagots on their return (prompted by the contradictory reports by which they

were greeted, and moved perhaps by a hope that Childe Harold himself had pursued his pilgrimage to Putney,) flew to Henrietta for an explanation, they found her confined to her own room by a nervous headach. To all their inquiries, she replied briefly and coldly, that the stranger was a near relative of her own, whom she had not seen for some time; and who had addressed himself by mistake to the residence of Mr. Bagot.

"You may rely on it, Harriet!" whispered Sophia to her sister, as they stole back through the shrubberies and the twilight,—"that it was Sir Henry Wellwood himself! How I wish we had been at home! Poor thing! We might have spared her all the pain and embarrassment of such a meeting!"

CHAPTER XX.

Voilà notre veuve écoutant la louange,
Poison qui de l'amour est le premier dégré;
La voilá qui trouve á son grè
Celui qui le lui donne.

LA FONTAINE.

IT was not till Sir Henry Wellwood regained his own door and dismounted from his horse, that he had the gratification of perceiving poor Tartar, with his eyes blinded by dust and his tongue a quarter of a yard in extension, following close at his heels. It was the first pedestrian feat the poor beast had accomplished for many years past.

During the three courses of a formal dinner party, to which his quondam master had been previously engaged in Arlington Street, Sir Henry could think of nothing but the joyful opportunity thus afforded him of returning to Myrtle Bank, for the restoration of the dog. He had not yet recovered the delirium of the morning's adventure. Was it Henrietta he had seen—or an angel?—

the harsh arrogant niece of Lady Mandeville, or his own Arabella transformed by some magic incantation into the goddess of beauty?—Where had the haughty Lady Wellwood acquired those feminine graces,—those brilliant accomplishments,—those simple tastes—that mild forbearing tone—such loveliness, such softness, such high-breeding? Alas!—alas!—why were all these charms, all these fascinations, fated to unite in the only woman severed by an eternal barrier from his approach!

"What an amazing fine animal you were riding this morning!" lisped a captain in the guards who sat opposite him at the dinner table.

"Yes! it is one of the famous Isle of Sky terriers," replied Sir Henry, thinking only of Tartar.

"Do you go to the review at Woolwich?" inquired Lady Lucy Lemaitre, by whom he was sitting.

"Perhaps she may deny herself! or, I—I—beg your ladyship's pardon,—I do not exactly understand——"

"Oh! I only inquired whether you go to the launch of the Nelson? The Duke of Wellington will be there."

"They seem on the most familiar footing," muttered Sir Henry, "the garden-gate renders it a common residence."

Lady Lucy, satisfied that this incoherent speech referred in some way or other to the lions of the hour, assured him that there was no communication between the gardens of Stable Yard, and those of Carlton House.

Sir Henry was now mystified in his turn; particularly when Byron, who sat on Lady Lucy's left hand, began to perplex him with inquiries concerning his mysterious beauty of Watier's. "Since you are indebted to me for your introduction to her notice," said the Childe, "you should at least oblige me by telling me the name of my friend? I called on Ingerfield this morning to cross examine him; but he was off to Woolwich."

"If you mean that beautiful girl who always dances with Lord Ingerfield," said Lady Lucy Lemaitre, "it is his cousin and mine, Sophy Bagot. Her father, who lives at a villa near town, is a very eminent man; and the two girls are charming."

"If our fair miracle should prove the mother," said Lord Byron, looking towards Wellwood, "I beg you will take Proserpine, and leave Ceres to *me*."

"Mrs. Bagot has been dead these fifteen years," observed Lady Lucy.

"But a very beautiful woman accompanied them last night?"—

"Last night?"

"At Watier's. She was dressed in a gray domino, and went away early."

"Hush!" whispered Lady Lucy in a low voice. "*That* was Lady Wellwood. Don't say another word: they are not on speaking terms; a separation took place very soon after their marriage."

In spite of all his efforts not to listen, Sir Henry *did* hear every syllable uttered by his fair neighbour and gossip; and each was a dagger to his heart. Yes! he clearly saw the indecorum, the utter impossibility of his seeking the society of Lady Wellwood. What would the world say,—the world which had already said so much about them! He could not bear the look of curiosity and interest with which Lord Byron now regarded them. On pretext of visiting the Opera, he quitted the dinner-table as soon as the ice was removed; and quickened his steps under the certainty that they would all begin talking of him the moment he was out of the room. Yet he had not courage to stay. He made his way home on foot in no very enviable frame of mind; and striving to fancy himself fatigued by the fête of the preceding night, resolved to refresh himself with a long night's sleep.

But in the solitude of his own chamber he was greeted by two images,—a real one and one ideal,—which murdered sleep;—Tartar and the lady of the gray domino;—the dog which had been so constant to *him*,—the wife to whom *he* was still so constant!—Can it be supposed that, with such companions, he retained any chance of steeping his senses in forgetfulness? No—no!—"Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care," would have nothing to say to him. He was sure at least of getting rid of one of his troublesome inmates before the return of night;—ere he completed his morning toilet, he determined to carry the modern Argus

back to Putney before two of the clock. The day was fine; and should he defer the journey, the fair proprietress of Myrtle Bank might perhaps be tempted out Emperor-hunting with the Bagots.

It was some comfort to him to perceive, on entering the swing-gates, that a carriage (not Collingbury's) was drawn up before the door. She was certainly at home;—but how could he manage to accost her in presence of perhaps some mutual friend? Having taken the precaution of coming without a groom, he had no hesitation in beckoning out Lady Wellwood's footman, who was gossiping with the servants, and insinuating a guinea into his hand with the rein of his horse. In return for this double deposite, John had no hesitation in informing him that the carriage belonged to a Miss Applebury; whose name being quite unfamiliar to him, Sir Henry was in the hall in a minute.

No upper servant appeared; for he had purposely omitted to "strike upon the bell." Boldly, therefore, opening the door of the drawing room to which he had been admitted the preceding day, and assuming a sort of apologetic face on perceiving Henrietta seated near a very tall spare, austere-looking female,—he advanced towards the sofa, hoping she had not been alarmed by Tartar's disappearance, and protesting he had only just discovered himself to have been the means of decoying away her favourite.

Lady Wellwood, whose countenance bore evident symptoms of indisposition, whose pale cheeks were shaded by a close cap, and her general air such as would have conveyed to the discerning Sir Jacob the cheering promise of a six weeks' illness, coloured to her very finger-tips with agitation and surprise, on finding herself thus accosted. It had not occurred to her as in the possible nature of things that Sir Henry would return—freely and voluntarily return—to Myrtle Bank; and his sudden and unannounced apparition almost overcame her. She had no leisure to perceive that Miss Applebury was examining her confusion and the handsome stranger, with her thin lips compressed with scorn,—her gray eyes dilated with wonder,—and her frizzed toupee standing on end with the discovery that the immaculate Lady Wellwood, (the miracle of dis-

cretion to whom her cousin Bagot chose to submit the care of his daughters, instead of electing herself to be their mother-in-law) did actually receive private visits from strange gentlemen, and on so familiar a footing that the servants suffered them to pass unannounced, while the "little dogs and all" regarded them as lords and masters! Miss Applebury had "always suspected, always known, that things were not quite right at Myrtle Bank. She had never said so;—oh! no;—thank Heaven she was no fetcher and carrier of scandal,—no pryer into the affairs of others; but now that the business was so very flagrant, she considered herself at liberty to speak her mind; and she must say that in her ladyship's delicate situation was a very indelicate thing (to say the least of it) that she should be courting the acquaintance of a set of giddy young libertines, merely because they happened to be good-looking. She hoped Mr. Bagot might not have to repent his misplaced confidence. Example was a frightful thing; and she should certainly take care to let her friend Mrs. Delafield know the manner in which her sister-in-law was proceeding."

It was fortunate for Sir Henry that Miss Applebury's anxiety to express the sentiments thus passing in her mind at Mortlake and West Hill, induced her to forego the dear delight of watching the guilty pair, and ascertaining how long the anonymous gentleman would think proper to extend his lounge in Lady Wellwood's green bower-chamber. But it was still more fortunate that she chanced to make Miss Bagot the auditress of her malicious comments. On her arrival, Harriet was actually on the point of setting forth, work-bag in hand, to pass the morning with her invalid friend; and readily conjecturing, with the sentimental tact of nineteen, that the mysterious stranger of to-day could be none other than the mysterious stranger of yesterday, and the mysterious stranger of yesterday than the monster of the four preceding years, she determined within herself that as the feuds or reconciliations of married people require no aid of witnesses, Tartar, his lady and Sir Henry, might be left to the adjustment of their own affairs. She instantly took off her bonnet, drew open the strings of her work-bag, and sat down contentedly to her satin stitch; while Miss Applebury dragged her

luckless horses and domestics eight miles farther out of their way to visit Mortlake, and premonish Mrs. Delafield of the blot affixed upon her family scutcheon. Blanche, who dearly loved her uncle, heard the tale of scandal with a blush and a sigh; while her mother promised that "poor dear Harry" should receive, without loss of time, a hint of the sly iniquities of his wife.

On putting this project into execution by relating to Sir Henry, and frankly naming her authority, the advent of the mysterious seducer of Tartar and Tartar's mistress, it struck her that he received the intelligence of his quondam idol's indiscretion with a very singular expression of countenance; and she was still more shocked when, instead of prosecuting any investigation on the subject, he addressed himself to Blanche for the loan of a few of her sketches, and busied himself in turning over his niece's portfolio, as eagerly and critically as if she had been about to stand an election for the honours of the Royal Academy. Little did she imagine, as she bumped half way back with her brother along the London Road, that his niece's drawings were about to be converted into tickets of admission for a third visit at Myrtle Bank! She wrote a long account of the business to Mrs. Allstone by that very day's post; but it was the Applebury version of the business,—a variorum edition, about as true to the text as old Woolham's dissertation to the ladies' maids. *He*, indeed, still contended that Satan, in person, had visited the fair lady of the villa. But Mrs. Delafield was of opinion that it was only one of his imps; a military demon standing six feet two in his Hobys,—concealing his horns under a Bond Street hat, and his tail under an olive-coloured surtout.

CHAPTER XXI.

I'll think no more of her! Who is not mine
By a bond dearer than the vulgar noose
Which law and church have knotted, must seek out
Some other heart to nestle in.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

It argues considerable magnanimity on the part of the amiable daughters of Mr. Bagot, that (even after the mystery of the great unknown had been ferreted out and brought to light, in the course of a tea-party between the housekeeper's room at West Hill, and the housekeeper's room at Myrtle Grove, and communicated to themselves in course of hair-curling by their maid, on the self-same night,) they carefully abstained from annoying Lady Wellwood by their interference. They were good-natured enough to put implicit faith in her complaint of bilious headachs, without boring her with notes or visits of inquiry; and left her in the hands of the quack Collingbury, and the monster of Wellwood Abbey, in the certainty that she was at years of discretion to eschew the evil designs of either or both.

Nay, although the summer weather tempted them forth into their shrubberies evening after evening, and although they were aware that Sir Henry, Henrietta, and the Isle of Sky terrier, were divided from them only by a rustic paling, they neither played the spy upon this oddest of odd courtships, nor insinuated a hint on the subject to Lord Ingerfield: who, on such a temptation, would scarcely have been able to withdraw his eye from the Pyramus and Thisbe apertures of the wooden wall. When we consider their loss in the excitement produced by the shower of heroes which was now dried up and disappearing,—that not an emperor, hero, nor Don Cossack, was now to be found from

Dover to Berwick-upon-Tweed—we must admit their forbearance to have been highly commendable.

Mean while, the situation of Lady Wellwood, if somewhat less painful to her feelings than the suspense she had been compelled to undergo during the four foregoing years, was far from satisfactory. Persons who perform their pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave along the straight-forward rail-road of common-place duties, whose difficulties consist in stretching the amount of pounds, shillings, and pence, allotted to their necessities between January and January so as exactly to cover the thirty-first of December, have very little notion of the strength and impenetrability of the cob-webs which the super-refinement of the great world spins around the destinies of its children.

The atmosphere of such a region possesses a magnifying power, which elevates trifles into fatal importance, and destroys all optical accuracy. Henrietta, for instance, who, from the moment she began to exercise her understanding, had existed in what is termed society, and whose principles on all minor points were grounded on its moral code, was induced to regard such a tribunal as secondary only to the mightiest. Though imbued with a thorough contempt for such persons as the Frederick Dorntons, Letitia Broadsdens, and Mrs. Delafields, of the circle in which she moved, she regarded the verdict to be pronounced by hundreds of Dorntons, Broadsdens, and Delafields, as an unimpugnable decree. Without energy or discrimination to say to herself, "Am I right—am I wrong?—what will the wise and virtuous say of me?—how do I appear in the sight of One to whom even the wise and virtuous are accountable?"—she could not silence in her mind the eternal whisper of "What will the world say to my inconsistency in receiving the friendly visits of a man whose conduct was such as to drive me from his house? How will people sneer at my folly when they find me courting the society of one from whom I actually and publicly demanded a separate maintenance!—There is something too humiliating in the idea of all the impertinent jests of which I shall become the object. Mrs. Allstone, when she learns that Wellwood has thus accidentally renewed his intimacy with me, will doubtless

warn him of the contempt he is likely to incur by such an exhibition of weakness; and I shall find him suddenly withdraw his visits and become as much estranged from me as ever. This will not do; I must be beforehand with such a step. I have been very imprudent in admitting, perhaps in encouraging his advances; but I will, at least, be the first to terminate the folly of such proceedings."

The next time Sir Henry Wellwood made his way to Myrtle Bank, he was refused admittance; nor could even a second guinea to the footman procure a remission of the sentence. Henrietta had taken care to be really absent from home; and for several following days, was at the pains to vary her modes of exercise,—so that with the aid of her horse, her boat, and her carriage, it was no very difficult matter to elude her visiter. But whether see-sawing on the Thames, or cantering along the turf of Richmond Park, one sole idea occupied the mind of the restless lady. "We are parted for ever—parted according to the legal provisions of a separate maintenance; Wellwood can be nothing now to me—I, nothing to him. We should but expose ourselves to the ridicule of society, by affecting to live on friendly terms after a quarrel so notorious."

Sometimes, indeed, particularly after her peremptory mode of declining his visits, she was tempted to doubt whether Sir Henry had entertained any other view than the mere gratification of his curiosity respecting her habits of life. Her jealousy was fairly set at rest by the discovery of little Blanche Delafield in the person of his fair-haired beauty; but might he not have formed some attachment in Spain, rendering it important to him to investigate the tenour of her own conduct;—might he not be intent on proposing some arrangement for the concealment of their union;—might he not have sought her solely to entreat her co-operation in annulling their ill-starred marriage?—"Poor dear Collingbury" found it extremely difficult to drown in camphor julep the little restless demon of discord conjured into activity within her bosom by this unlucky conjecture!

After all, notwithstanding the idle hopes that had begun to re-animate her heart concerning Wellwood's desire to seek in her friendship a solace for that tenderness

of wedded union, which incompatibility of temper—like the sword flaming in the hands of the guardian cherubim at the gate of Paradise—closed against their approach; what had Sir Henry said or done to warrant her notion that he had forgiven the past, or was anxious to conciliate the future?—

Accident—though *he* perchance might be ill-naturedly tempted to attribute the whole affair to design—accident had caused her to faint in his arms, and had brought him ignorantly and unwittingly to West Hill in pursuance of the common courtesies of life. The necessity of restoring her dog had induced his second visit;—and as to the third, common honesty required her to remember that she had expressed as much desire to see his niece's drawings as Sir Henry had shown to obtain her opinion on their merits. On that occasion, they had walked round the grounds together; and while examining the orangerie, it was indispensable to quote the land

> Where the citron and orange are finest of fruit,

to recur to Seville, with its boleros and fandangos and groves of the golden apple. The sweet-lemon had due mention among its delicious varieties; and Henrietta having testified some curiosity respecting this anomalous production, nothing could be more natural than that he should visit all the conservatories of the suburbs, procure a specimen of the plant, and bring it in his cabriolet to Myrtle Bank the following morning.

Then he had a collection of Modinhas, exactly suited to her guitar; and some views of the Sierra Morena, forming a charming study for her pencil. *He* had, in fact, slightly mentioned them; and *she*, half advisedly—half spontaneously—had affected considerable interest in the subject. But might he not secretly accuse her of having originated all these interviews; of having coquetted with his attentions, with a view to a sudden dismissal; or still worse, of having encouraged them in the hope of an eventual reconciliation? Her pride—the pride of beautiful five-and-twenty—spurned so abject a notion! She vowed that he should enter the green drawing-room no more: and though Tartar wandered backwards and forwards over the lawn, and round and

round through the shrubberies, waiting the accustomed arrival of his beloved master, morning and evening came and went for half a dozen following days, and Henrietta's restlessness and irritability still demonstrated the absence of the Peninsula hero.

Sir Henry was now alarmed in his turn. He had entertained, it is true, no intentions of the kind called serious, touching the renewal of his connexion with the niece of Lady Mandeville. Circumstances wholly beyond his powers of anticipation, had roused emotions which his better reason prompted him to combat and subdue. He had found in his alienated wife, a woman whose beauty was far more richly developed than that of the Hatty of Tunbridge Wells, or the Lady Wellwood of the Green Dragon; and whose manners, tone, conversation, and mode of life, might have served as a model to her sex;—who was now as wise as she was fair—as good as she was gracious;—a companion worthy to render earth a paradise—an angel, gifted to train the children of earth for the skies. He did not pause to reflect upon the matter:—he never gravely inquired of himself whether he had courage to confront the jeers of society, and woo her, and "wed her o'er again—why not?"—but fell in love (and consequently out of all capacity for rational argument, either with himself or other people,) in a style that only too strongly resembled the "over head and ears" infatuation of his days of subalternism and younger brotherhood.

It was not till he was refused admittance for the fourth time at the gate of Myrtle Bank, that he was stunned into a sufficiently reasonable condition to deliberate on the nature of his business there. On returning Londonwards along the King's Road, he began to assure himself that Henrietta had certainly been making a fool of him; that she had deluded him into the snare for the purpose of laughing at him, and perhaps exposing him to the laughter of the Bagots. Nay, as he reached those fields of many thistles, now converted into the aristocratic purlieus of Belgrave and Eaton Squares, and chanced to meet the eye of Lord Ingerfield, who was cantering down to Putney to make love to his cousin Sophy (which Sophy had whispered to his lordship, on the preceding day, her own notions touching the posi-

tion of affairs at Myrtle Bank,) he readily detected an expression of saucy triumph in the dark blue eyes of the young Guardsman, which brought a flush of indignation into his own face. Idiot that he had been, not to detect the malicious views of Lady Wellwood—hypocrite that she had been, was, and ever would be!—There was no Frederiek Dornton—no Miss Broadsden now—to be upbraided as the instigators of her errors and offences:—genuine, spontaneous, self-sufficing, artful malignity, was the source of all the courtesies of which he had so wantonly allowed himself to become the dupe! He had been a fool throughout the business; and he told himself so at least half a dozen times, between the southern and northern extremities of Grosvenor Place.

He was quite right, he *had* been a fool! From the moment he found himself acting in opposition to his principles, hunting through nursery grounds for citron trees and portfolios for landscapes, for a woman—a wife—whose previous conduct had induced him almost to turn her out of his house, and quite out of his soul, he should have reined up to parley and clearly ascertained *her* feelings and intentions in his own; but, above all, his former knowledge of Henrietta's subservience of mind to those possessed of an influence over her heart, should have apprized him of the advantage he might obtain in making friends of the Bagots. Man and man meet on far more equal and confidential terms than man and woman! He ought to have sought out the grave and honourable father of Sophia and Harriet, placed his position before him, inquired into the nature of Lady Wellwood's plans, projects; and sentiments, and determined his own conduct by a fair comparison between a life of domestic happiness enjoyed in defiance of the flouts and scoffs of the fashionable world; and a separate maintenance, enjoyed in all the proud consciousness of consistency and the applause of May Fair and its echoes.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh! God defend me; how am I beset!
What kind of catechizing call you this?
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

BUT although Sir Henry Wellwood had shown himself so much more eager to consult the nurserymen of Hammersmith and bespeak the alliance of Tartar in his attack upon Myrtle Bank, than that of the neighbourly philosopher, Mr. Bagot had as carefully and anxiously watched the progress of his manœuvres as though he had throughout been engaged to play Horatio to our Hamlet.

It is not to be imagined that a man of strong sense and feeling, such as the philanthropist of West Hill, would have been induced by the mere circumstance of lodgings at Hastings on the same Parade with Lady Mandeville, to adopt her beautiful niece as a chosen friend for his daughters. No sooner did he perceive the preference entertained by Harriet and Sophia for a lady living in a state of separation from her husband, than he prosecuted the most minute inquiries into the origin of so untoward a circumstance; and exercised as scrupulous an investigation into the principles and conduct of Lady Wellwood, as ever he had done into the properties of a new mineral or the nature of a curious fossil. After listening to the conflicting testimony of her foes and friends, and watching with an observant eye the nature of her emotions on the sudden death of her aunt, Mr. Bagot adopted the wise and just opinion that waywardness of temper, leading to a want of self-government on both sides, was the sole cause of the misfortune; that Henrietta, a spoiled child at the period of her union with Sir Henry, had naturally behaved

like one; that she had been ill brought up, ill-advised, and ill-conducted, as far as selfish, peevish, presuming egotism could influence her conduct. But he saw that the fermentation of her petulent youth was over—that a bright, clear, generous stream was the result of the process;—and had no hesitation in electing the lady of the separate maintenance to be the companion and protectress of his motherless girls. Nor did many months elapse, ere he began to unite her with them in the fatherly fondness of his counsels and affections.

There was, in fact, something peculiarly endearing in the character and manners of the Henrietta of Myrtle Bank;—something of the softness of womanly penitence, unembittered by the galling consciousness mingling with the remorse of the fallen angel. She had faults to repent, but no crimes;—she had erred, but without sinning.—Her tears resembled the April showers—which, freshening the dust on which they fall,—

"In bright exhalement reach the skies;"

—not the big, heavy drops of a stormy atmosphere. Even in her gayest of gaiety there was something subdued and self-reprehending, as if checked by the wisdom of a heart which felt it had no right to be too happy; and the very mildness of her demeanour, which custom had now rendered nature, was a sort of sacrifice laid on the altar of wounded affection. She had learned to look on her former wilfulness as a sin; for it had been the cause of her grief and danger to him she loved.

With paternal interest did Mr. Bagot mark the application with which Lady Wellwood devoted herself to the improvement of her mind, that she might leave no idle hour open for the approach of that worst of apparitions, the spectre of the past. During the three years she had lived in intimate companionship with his family, he had seen her acquire more knowledge and a higher refinement of accomplishment than usually adorn her sex: but he had also seen, and with a degree of admiration amounting to respect, her eagerness to acquire wisdom as well as knowledge,—to form her character as well as her mind,—and subdue those errors of disposition which characterized the Henrietta of Lady

Mandeville's mischievous fashioning. She was not content to adorn the garden with flowers, she chose that not a single weed should deteriorate their beauty.

Under these circumstances, the worthy old philosopher of West Hill judged it unnecessary to warn her against the adoration of the tribes of Ragley and Durham, or the attentions of Sir Thomas Riddlesworth: common fame had placed its buoy over the sunken rock, and he knew that she was fore-armed against so notorious a danger. But on learning from his daughter Harriet the scene which had occurred to interrupt their enjoyment at the fête at Watier's, and from his daughter Sophy her suspicions that the Sir Henry Wellwood who had so ingratiated himself into their favour on that occasion, and the mysterious visiter whose proceedings had caused poor Woolham's gray head to shake through nine long summer days of wonder, were one and the same individual, he felt strongly inclined to play the monitor. It was rumoured at West Hill that a gentleman, evincing the devoted attention of a lover or a Collingbury, was admitted daily to make personal inquiries after the headachs of his lovely neighbour; and that a fine, tall, soldier-like looking man had been frequently seen in attendance on the invalid as she sauntered through her favourite shrubberies. Without one farther word of evidence, he was satisfied that the man thus favoured could be none other than the hero of Vittoria, and Wellwood Abbey; and eagerly did he long to suggest the propriety of terminating all rumours, all scandal on the subject, and (contrary to his usual precepts and practice) defying the opinion of the world, to secure the restoration of her own and her husband's happiness. He was well assured, both by his own observations and the reports of his girls, that Sir Henry and Henrietta were both equally inclined to repent their share in that fatal parchment which had been so superfluously blotted with hieroglyphics in their behalf, five years previous to the White's fête; and almost wished that his scientific proficiency had initiated him into the secret, or circumstances into the power of making it available, by which the villany of Sir Giles Overreach is converted into the fifth-act catastrophe of a tragedy.

But since he was unable "to rail the seal from off

the bond," or decompose the fatal ink by which Gray's Inn had ratified that barbarous deed (of separation,) he resolved, if he could not give assistance, to give advice; and having armed himself with a curious botanical specimen by way of apology for his visit, cautiously unclosed the wicket connecting his own lawn with that of Myrtle Bank, and made his way towards the house. We have seen that it was the habit of the Bagots as well as of Lady Wellwood, to use no ceremony on such occasions; to "come like shadows, so depart; but the venerable botanist, aware that visiters were *now* admitted at the villa, whose presence might seem to render his own intrusive, resolved to go round to the front entrance, for the purpose of giving due intimation of his approach, and an option of denial to his lovely pupil.

It was in passing near the rustic pavillion appropriated by Lady Wellwood as a painting-room, and usually kept locked, that he discerned through the window a glimmer of white draperies, which induced him to pause on his way in the belief that his counsels were superfluous. Since her ladyship's nervous headachs were sufficiently amended to permit her recourse to the strong vapours of turpentine and copal varnish, he trusted that her heartach was also convalescent. A second glance sufficed to alter his opinions. Lady Wellwood was seated indeed before a portrait, long in progress, of her friend Harriet; but nor palette nor brush was in her hand;—her face was concealed in her handkerchief, while an open letter lay on the ground at her feet.

For a moment the old man determined to retire unobserved; and select some happier moment for his homily than one in which the sobs of his penitent could probably overpower his own eloquence. But after moving a few steps along the gravel, he returned. Might not the present moment be important,—the letter critical;—could his advice be tendered in a more useful or persuadable season than the hour of affliction?—He took another glance through the window; when something in the person or attitude of the weeping lady chancing to remind him of his own girls,—brought the father into his heart and the tears into his eyes! It occurred to him that his own Sophy or Harriet might one

day need a father's counsels in their domestic perplexities; and having several times tapped at the window without notice or reply, he now raised his voice and requested admittance.

Lady Wellwood started; but quickly reassured by the well-known tones which were wont to convey to her ears

"Truths as sublime as ever Athens taught,"

and precepts as consolatory as are to be drawn from sublunary sources, she hastened forward to unclose the door. Scott and Lochinvar have duly commemorated that union of

"A smile on the lip and a tear in the eye,"

which adds a new charm to beauty, and which is ornamental only to the beautiful; but the bard of Marmion has passed over that more touching expression of female loveliness when the smile struggles with the tear, and the lip quivers with the anguish of the effort. Such was the charm which embellished the countenance of Henrietta; when, advancing with extended hands and an attempt at sunshine to welcome her dear old friend, she found the attempt ineffectual and suddenly burst into a flood of tears! Mr. Bagot led her back to her seat, nor uttered a word till the paroxysm had subsided. As his visits were not appraisable, like those of Sir Jacob Collingbury, at so much per minute, he had leisure to wait till her fair ladyship became more intelligible or intelligent—till she could either talk or listen.

The sex of the sufferer considered, the alternative may be readily inferred. It *was* Lady Wellwood who was the first to speak—it *was* Lady Wellwood who pointed to the ill-omened letter,—exclaiming, with spasmodic and laconic incoherence,—"He is gone!" —But notwithstanding that Mr. Bagot had been admitted into the confidence of her alarm on discovering the unauthorized absence of poor dear Tartar the preceding week, he was not stupid enough to conjecture for a single second that her four-footed favourite af-

forded on this occasion the antecedent to the personal pronoun. The possession of two daughters "passing fair," tended to enlighten his mind on these interesting points. Although a philosopher, he was well aware that "he,"—an apostrophic he—from the lips of youthful beauty, must refer to a single and singly-beloved individual; and that "he,"—an insulted he,—from the lips of Lady Wellwood, could regard only the Vittorian aide-de-camp. Satisfied that the mode and motive of the departure thus abruptly announced would be gradually explained, he took his seat in the Gothic arm-chair usually occupied by his daughter Harriet while sitting for her portrait to the weeping artist before him, and busied himself in a curious examination of the Dicotyledonous specimen in his hand; whereby he hoped at once to spare the blushes of Henrietta, and illuminate the pages of Loudon's Magazine.

But, however prepared for an explanation, he did not anticipate so entire a confidence as that about to be bestowed upon him by Lady Wellwood; who, like Count Hamilton's Golden Ram, seemed of opinion that stories which begin in the middle are extremely perplexing. She commenced, therefore, with the very commencement of her autobiography, dating the first sentence from Tunbridge, and concluding the last at Myrtle Bank; bespeaking his attention by that touching phrase—"I am an orphan—I have neither friend nor relative to advise me;—assist me, dear sir, with your better judgment;"—and ending with the modest apostrophe, "And now that you are acquainted with all my errors, all my afflictions,—what would you have me do?"

Fortunately Mr. Bagot was rescued from the danger of precipitate counsel in so delicate a dilemma. While engaged in perusing for a second time the letter which had been a source of so many tears to his companion, and which expressed in such strong terms and with such yearning warmth of affection, the grief of Sir Henry Wellwood on finding himself banished from her presence, his indignant accusation that she had trifled "with his attachment for the purpose of obtaining this petty triumph," and his final determination to banish himself for ever from a country containing his bane

and antidote, the idol and torment of his soul, the object of all his wishes, the obstacle to all his happiness" —John (the venal John of many guineas) made his appearance to announce that "Mrs. Dornton was in the drawing-room."

"Why did you admit her?—I told you I could not even see Sir Jacob Collingbury this morning."

"I beg your pardon, my lady; your ladyship said you could not see any *gentleman;*—but the gentleman has not called yet, my lady."

John seemed to understand Lady Wellwood's indefinitives as well as Mr. Bagot had construed her personal pronouns. He certainly had not divined her inclinations, however, in admitting the visit of the malicious Helena at so awkward a crisis. "Return to the house, and tell Mrs. Dornton you could not find me," said she, blushing while she suggested the untruth.

"No—no, my dear," cried old Bagot, assuming for the first time a paternal tone of familiarity with the fair penitent whose confessions had been so frankly deposited in his hands, and dismissing John to announce Lady Wellwood's speedy arrival, "Exert yourself to see Mrs. Dornton; exert yourself to follow your usual occupations. Nothing incapacitates us for decision on points involving our connexion with the world, so much as to fix our attention exclusively and in solitude on the subject under debate. You have made up your mind, you say, that your separation from Sir Henry Wellwood having been effected at your own desire, and actuated by your own wilfulness, is a step that cannot be recalled. You,—who were so easily tempted to annul an engagement the most important of any dependent on the exercise of human will,—an engagement contracted in the presence of God—solemnized at his altar, and sanctified in his holy name,—are unwilling to incur the scorn of the world by cancelling a document of mere legal obligation! You would condemn the man you love, and what is more, whom you *respect,* to the misery of a widowed home;—you would retain your own equivocal standing in society (for a woman separated from her husband, let the grounds of provocation be what they may, occupies at least a suspicious

place in public regard) rather than condescend to own that Henrietta at five and twenty is wiser, and (suffer me to say it) *better* than Henrietta in her nonage! Let us dismiss the subject for a while. I will return hither in the evening, to tell you as truly as I would tell my own Sophy, my own Harriet, in what light I regard such a determination. Mean while, oblige me by receiving the visit of this Mrs. Dornton; and while dispassionately weighing the value of her opinions and that of the triflers of society, against the approval of the virtuous and the wise, estimate your own discretion in sacrificing your peace of mind to the judgment of such false oracles."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Fair to no purpose,—artful to no end,—
Young without lovers,—old without a friend.

POPE.

L'aigle lui dit. tout en colère,
Caquet bon-bec, ma mie, Adieu!—Je n'ai que faire
D'une babillarde à ma cour;
C'est un fort méchant caractère.

LA FONTAINE.

HAD the amiable philanthropist of West Hill been aware that the visiter to whom he despatched his reluctant disciple was to be classed in the order of the venomous reptiles, rather than in that of the ephemeral insects which he believed to possess an undue influence over Lady Wellwood's mind, he would perhaps have spared her the effort. Had the lady of the swollen eyelids been led to suspect the purpose for which Mr. Bagot claimed this respite of judgment—this suspension of her decision—she would certainly have detain-

ed him in the little rustic studio of Myrtle Grove for farther remonstrance.

As she approached the portico, she saw that Mrs. Dornton, who had wandered forth to pillage her carnation beds, was standing with an uplifted eye-glass to watch the receding figure of Mr. Bagot; whose fine upright person deceived her at a distance in the opinion that her friend Hatty had been wandering in her shrubberies with the mysterious stranger described by Collingbury to poor dear Mrs. Delafield, and by Mrs. Delafield to the sister-in-law of her poor dear departed spouse. Mrs. Dornton having visited Mortlake the preceding week, to grumble her complaints of the inattention of her beloved Frederick in neglecting to procure her tickets for White's and Watier's, and his insulting notion of putting her off with one for the Generals' ball, (the *pis-aller* of that festive period,) found her murmurs echoed by the lamentations of Sir Henry Wellwood's sister over the errors of their former friend, —the degenerate niece of Lady Mandeville,—the false and frail Henrietta. After many a fruitless conjecture, touching the name and nature of the young gentleman who was described by Sir Jacob to be so handsome, so prepossessing, and the proprietor of so fine a horse, Mrs. Dornton determined to appease her curiosity by a visit to Myrtle Bank; where a course of dexterous cross-examination might, perhaps, avail to determine whether Sir Thomas Riddlesworth, Lord Ragley, or the Duke of Durham, were the favoured individual causing so singular an acceleration in the pulse of her susceptible friend. She still trusted to discover that the offender was some far less illustrious individual; that her dear Henrietta (whom she now trebly detested as the remote and innocent cause of her own disastrous marriage,) had been committing herself by a flirtation with some Mr. Smith or Captain Brown:—that her fault was ungilded by the false glitter of fashion.

But if the Helena of the Tunbridge Rocks, in her pink satin hat and feathers, formed a disadvantageous contrast to the fair Henrietta Broughton, what might not be said of the distance from the graceful dignified Lady Wellwood to the gaudy, fretful, meretricious, shrewish-looking woman whom she now conducted into

the green retreat of her luxurious boudoir; and whose hollow looks, rouge-seared complexion, factitious youthfulness, and sneering malignity, almost warranted the contempt lavished upon her by the spendthrift who, like the file in the fable, had proved too hard even for a viper.

"From loveless youth to unrespected age,"

this "veteran of the world" had pursued her heartless career, without conferring or enjoying one day of happiness: and she now directed her morning's airing as far as Putney, solely in the hope of irritating or mortifying the victim of her former manœuvres.

"What on earth could tempt you, my dear Lady Wellwood," said she, fixing her eyes on the tear-stained cheeks of her friend, "to take those Bagot girls to White's? You must be aware that they never were intended by art or nature for the *beau monde;* and you only render yourself and them ridiculous by pushing them beyond their sphere. I understand too, that poor Sir Henry Wellwood was very much hurt by your appearing at a fête where you must have been aware that *his* presence was indispensable."

"Was he?" mechanically answered Henrietta; scarcely able to hear even the name of poor Sir Henry Wellwood without tears.

"Dornton tells me that it is a favourite amusement at the Guards' Club to watch Lord Ingerfield making a fool of that silly little cousin of his,—that giggling Sophy Bagot."

"It is a diversion they should make the most of," cried Lady Wellwood, rallying her spirits; "for he will soon be authorized to resent the liberty:—in the course of a few weeks she will become Lady Ingerfield. Mr. Bagot has already given his consent."

"Poor Harriet!—What a blow to her pride to see her younger sister become a Viscountess!—I hope there is plenty of willow among the groves of West Hill."

"I fancy we are more likely to stand in need of orange-blossom. There will be another wedding before the end of the summer."

"Indeed!" said Helena, fancying she was now on

the brink of the secret; and that a divorce was about to give freedom to the lady and lord of the Abbey, and leave them to the formation of more auspicious ties. "And so then, after all, the separate maintenance will end, where it ought to have begun, with——"

"It *will* end where it began," said Lady Wellwood, with spirit, "in misrepresentation and misery to myself. I did not refer to my own affairs: it is long—very long—since I have possessed a friend sufficiently trustworthy to claim my confidence. I alluded to the marriage of Mr. Bagot's eldest daughter with the Duke of Durham, of which the solemnization is fixed for August. He will then be five-and-twenty, and, according to his father's will, of age."

"Humph!" growled Mrs. Dornton, provoked beyond measure, and startled into sincerity. "Then after all, perhaps, it *may* have been the Duke whom Collingbury so often surprised here, and whose visits were the cause of so much agitation to yourself? You really should have been more guarded, my dear!—for though you live so little in the world that public opinion may seem unimportant, the voice of society always finds its time and place to reach one's ear.

"It is sometimes very long on its journey, or you would have heard of Harriet's and Sophy's approaching marriages, which have been arranged this fortnight past."

"To say the truth, my attention has been engrossed by the scandalous stories they have tended to originate and circulate respecting yourself. You have no notion of the romances Mrs. Delafield has thought fit to compile on the subject."

"I wish to have none. She is a very inoffensive woman, and must have been misled by the misrepresentation of others."

"Collingbury is the greatest tittle-tattle on earth. If I were you, I would bring him to account pretty severely for spreading scandal at *my* expense. What business had he to make mysteries concerning your visiters? I have little doubt he knew the 'young and handsome military-looking man' by sight as well as you or I?"

"I fancy *not*," replied Henrietta, with some dignity.

"I am not aware that he ever saw Sir Henry Wellwood before."

"Sir Henry Wellwood!" cried Mrs. Dornton, dropping her eye-glass with amazement. "Why then you are about to form some amicable arrangement?—Surely it might have been decently settled by your lawyers."

"There is no arrangement necessary," replied Lady Wellwood, losing her courage and becoming confused in her expressions. "Every thing of that kind was settled during my Aunt Mandeville's lifetime, five years ago."

"Then what in the world brings him to Myrtle Bank; to play the spy, or the lover?—or——"

"All vindictive feeling has long been at an end between us," said Henrietta, piqued into the assumption of self-command; "and I see nothing remarkable in the fact that two persons, whose domestic union was interrupted solely by infirmity of temper, should meet on the footing of a friendly acquaintance.

"To form a laughing-stock of society!" cried Helena, bursting into a contemptuous fit of merriment. "Just conceive how it will amuse the world to discover that you two, who could not live under the same roof without quarrelling, and who actually made public their discussions by a squabble in a common inn, are playing the fool by a tender courtship in your dotage! To be sure, now Mrs. Allstone is settled in Yorkshire, Wellwood must find the Abbey so dull that even a family fight might be an amendment; and Myrtle Bank will be a sad incumbrance to you when the Bagots no longer afford a pretext for your appearing at all the balls of the season, and driving into town every morning."

"No!" said Henrietta, trying to encounter malice with malice. "I shall retain a very fair apology for a little dissipation, in my visits to Durham House; and the Ingerfields have already purchased a splendid house in Grosvenor Place."

"Well, take care you don't interfere with their billing and cooing. It is very unsafe to intrude upon people during their honey-year. One sometimes finds oneself Madame de Trop."

"I have no fear on that head," said Henrietta, pointedly. "Having no object to attain, nor evil wishes to

gratify in interrupting the domestic happiness of my married friends, I do not apprehend they will ever have cause to repent having extended their hospitality towards me."

Mrs. Dornton, furious at the reproof her malignity had courted, now rose to take leave; and poor Lady Wellwood almost regretted her departure. She dreaded to find herself alone, and under the necessity of examining herself steadfastly whether she repented her former errors; whether her pride were still sufficiently predominant to harden her heart against its duties, its natural affections, its hopes of future happiness.

She had now heard the worst. "She should become a laughing-stock to the world!" But it was not by that Bagot-like portion of the world, whose respect and good-will she had been conciliating by four years of prudent, amiable, and graceful self-government. It was the world of Dorntons and Broadsdens, of Collingburys and Appleburys; and if, perchance, the merry jest of an Ingerfield, or the caustic sentence of a Byron, were vented on her feminine inconsistency, the annoyance would be temporary, the laugh would expire unechoed, the cynic taunt soon be forgotten,—while her own peace of mind remained secure for life. What—what—were all the sneers of all the multitudes assembled at that very moment, by the public rejoicings in the public parks, in honour of the return of peace—compared with the joy she should experience in listening to Wellwood's grateful thanks for her concessions; in feeling the kind, good, sensible, forgiving Mrs. Allstone locked in her arms; in renewing her rides, drives, walks, and whispers, among those charming groves on the banks of Trent, which had witnessed the only truly happy moments of her life; in being able to close her eyes in sleep (unaided by Sir Jacob's juleps) with her conscience cleared of the stain of ingratitude towards the man who had chosen her as the partner of his honest heart and brilliant destinies; and the still more deadly sin of ingratitude towards that Providence, whose blessings she had converted into a curse.

Long before she contrived to end this interesting argument to her own satisfaction, two important counsellors were enlisted in the cause of the contending party;—

Mr. Bagot, who was just returned from town, and Sir Henry Wellwood, whose foot he had suspended on the step of a travelling-carriage, the post-boys of which had their ticket made out for the Barnet road. The urbane and conciliating old man found no difficulty in persuading the traveller that it might be expedient to visit Myrtle Bank, on his way to Yorkshire, to take leave of the Allstones; in order that, if Henrietta could be induced to accompany him in his tour on the Rhine, she might have leisure for her preparations.

But, however great the eloquence of either leading or junior counsel, it was not put to the trial. A single glance at Henrietta's countenance, as he entered the green drawing-room, served to convince Sir Henry Wellwood that a rainbow was in the sky; while a single flood of tears wept upon the shoulder of the olive green surtout, sufficed to convince her ladyship that her husband's soul had still no other idol!

It may be doubted whether the philosopher of West Hill experienced greater triumph and greater joy on the morning which united his two beloved girls to husbands eminent equally in rank and worthiness, than on the afternoon which drew a tear from his old eyes over the "one sinner that repented" at Myrtle Bank.

Sir Henry and Lady Wellwood were discreet enough to afford ample time for the discussions and impertinencies of the gossips of society, by a prolonged tour on the continent; a tour which might almost be termed bridal. After a winter passed at Vienna, and another at Naples, in the enjoyment of new pleasures and the acquirement of new accomplishments, they returned to their native country to discover that the affair of the separate maintenance was already extinguished by fifty newer scandals:—to find the Duke of Durham turned Cabinet minister;—Lord Ingerfield fox-hunter;—Byron married, parted, banished;—Dornton benched, whitewashed, and sent to Coventry;—his wife and old Letitia "fighting their battles o'er again;" at the Cheltenham card-tables;—Mrs. Delafield married to Sir Jacob;—and Blanche about to be united to the heir of Shoreham Castle.

Among the earliest tenants of the new wing, (now furnished with the interesting product of their Italian

researches,) were the Allstones, the Durhams, and the Ingerfields. But of all the party, with the exception of little Harry Wellwood,—who, on this occasion, was first introduced to a game of romps by his Yorkshire cousins Tom and Arabella,—the happiest was Mr. Bagot; who not only regarded the domestic happiness of his hosts as the work of his own hands, but had the rapture of transmitting to the Royal Society some curious specimens of arragonite, discovered by himself in a neglected mine in the neighbourhood of Wellwood Abbey.

A DIVORCÉE.

Divorce is the sacrament of adultery.

MERCIER.

CHAPTER I.

The prudent wife or careful matron is much more serviceable to the world than blustering heroines or virago queens.

GOLDSMITH.

IT is an easy thing, and a very pleasing exercise for the garrulity of common-place people, to dissert on the wickedness of parents who incite their children to interested marriages; and on the vileness of children who (being men and women) regard any other influence in their matrimonial choice, than that of pure and disinterested affection. An alliance arising out of a few weeks' intimacy kindled in the crush of a ball-room, is regarded (by the fair of May Fair) as a far more respectable modification of the marriage vow, than one originating in consideration for the comforts and decencies of life, in the counsel of mutual friends, and the eligibility of an honourable and prosperous home.

When Amelia Kendal bestowed her hand on Mr. Allanby of Allanby Hall, a man with ten thousand per annum and a gray pigtail, nothing could exceed the disgust with which the conduct of her father and mother in promoting the match, was discussed by the fathers and mothers of half the unmarried girls of her own age and set. Not one of them would have allowed a daughter of their own to humiliate herself by a connexion so bare-facedly interested! They were all satisfied that Amelia looked upon Mr. Allanby with detestation; that her parents had dragooned her into the marriage; and that they would live to repent their misdoings.

The new Mrs. Allanby was one of ten children, the offspring of the younger son of a younger brother. Her mother,

A poor, a patient, yet a happy wife,
Stealing when daylight's common tasks were done,

An hour for mother's work,—and singing low
While her tired husband and her children slept,—

was one of those luckless daughters of Eve who mark the annual progress of life by a yearly addition to their redundant little olive branches; without regard to the difficulty of procuring them an adequate supply of bread and milk,—of muslin frocks and blue jackets. Though fair enough to have set Almack's in an uproar, and high-born enough to have graced the festivities of the court, all the years of her beauty were devoted to penurious housewifery, all the animation of her cheerful temper subdued by the heavy pressure of privation. She had scarcely dared to rejoice in the vigour and growth of her children, from the apprehension of an incapability to maintain them in the sphere apportioned to their barren birthright; and her home, instead of ringing with the joyous carol of their youthful voices, was either gloomy with the ill-humour of a mortified and disappointed man, or noisy with the insolence of ill-paid and over-tasked servants—the clamour of creditors—the bitterness of want!—In such a region, one solitary and horrible apparition seems to concentrate all the terrors of human misery—even the gaunt spectral, griping hag called Poverty! The Kendals had no leisure to devise any other shape for misfortune. Sentimental woes were out of the question. Where "fire, meat, and clothes—meat, clothes, and fire," are often lacking and always scanty, it is difficult to cultivate heroic passions, or indulge in refined emotions. The hands and feet of the young Kendals were too cold, and their broadcloth too threadbare, to admit of much sensibility. For the first fifteen years of their lives, their notions of luxury consisted in an abundant dinner, plenty of clean linen, a warm comfortable bed-room with not above two brothers or sisters to share it, shoes without patches, and hosen without darns; but at the expiration of that period, a wonderful stroke of fortune befell the little household. The discontented father of the ten needy children came into possession of a fortune of fifteen hun-

dred per annum; and this influx of prosperity, which might have been accounted beggary by any other family of similar dignity of pedigree, was to them as the abundance of Aboulcasem's treasury. For the first time the needy family ate unchecked of good wheaten bread, and luxuriated in garments unadorned by the profuse embroidery of the needle. Mr. Kendal took a house in Bath for the benefit of his daughter's education, and his own rubber; and his wife found a spare moment (for the first time since her married life) to sit down and breathe, unmolested by the active duties of the cupboard and the wardrobe.

The effects of this sudden release from peremptory occupation, produced a mood of mind somewhat resembling that pleasing sensation of the body—that *itching* described by the ancient philosopher, as consequent on the removal of manacles. Mrs. Kendal experienced a sudden gush of domestic philosophy; and though there may be "more things in Heaven and Earth" than were dreamt of in it, it was both comprehensive and conclusive. After reviewing carefully those sixteen years of productiveness and toil, of weekly bills, nursery grievances, and apothecaries' accounts; after remembering how many pangs it had cost her to abridge the indulgences of her children; to refrain from the liberal promptings of gentle blood, derived from the early habits of her father's house; to abstain from generous actions and even from charitable duties; after reflecting that she had been unable to call one hour of the twenty-four her own, for the cultivation of her tastes, or even for the self-communing, indispensable to all who live—and *all who die*,—she came to a conclusion that not one of her dear girls, if *she* could prevent it, should ally herself with a poor man.

Mrs. Kendal was well aware, mean while, of the importance attached, among the sublime and beautiful of the Bath coteries, to the designation of a "charming young man," whether rich or poor. She was not blind to the value of personal and mental attractions; but she saw that merit of mind and body is too often made to cloak a deficiency of estate. The prudent mother entertained a lively remembrance of the period when, as a lovely girl in *her* teens, she had been warranted in the

folly of marrying Sir Vavasor Kendal's cousin Fred. (with two hundred and fifty pounds per annum in addition to her own seventy) by the superiority of *his* personal and mental attractions. *She* had married for love—had united herself to "the most charming—the most elegant young man about town." Yet among the pains and penalties of adapting three hundred and twenty pounds to the maintenance of eighteen hungry and full-grown individuals, during the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, the charming young man had become a sulky brute, and the elegant young man most profanely addicted to brandy and water. She had seen him grow more and more fretful at the disappointment of every fresh application to his cousin, Sir Vavasor, for a small place, or rising clerkship; and more and more frightful when every spring a young child was added and an aged relative subtracted from the family stock, without the addition of half-a-crown to his means of maintenance,—whether by legacy, donation, or salary. She had seen Cousin Fred. come to be voted a bore by the Baronet, and a bear by every one else; monopolizing the fire from his poor little red-nosed children,—and swallowing five mutton chops for his own share, when there were only thirteen left for the other seventeen individuals of the family. When a rich uncle sent the thrifty mother some old Malaga during a severe illness, the charming young man appropriated it without compunction; when a kind god-mother bestowed some pieces of nankeen on a fine little boy (one of their last three or four specimens of the infant Hercules) it had found its way to and fro the tailor of "the elegant young man," in the shape of a fashionable dressing-gown. No, no!——no more marrying for love in the family!—a comfortable home—a respectable competence—afforded the truest ground-work for wedded happiness. Having snatched, between the pauses of her stitchery, a daily hour or two to impart to her daughters those elegant accomplishments in which she had formerly been a proficient, she could not bear that their graces of mind should be benumbed by the touch of poverty,—despised by a needy husband,—and rendered sinful by encroaching on the duties inseparable from a growing family.

It must be owned that the girls were, or professed to be, of the same opinion. They could not yet forget the gowns of serge, and hard fare, and hard beds, and deficiency of all means of service towards others, which had shut up the expanding impulses of their youth. They still remembered having envied the fat wife of the squire, her power of distributing coals and blankets during the winter, to individuals still nearer to freezing point than themselves; and having cried when they detected their mother weeping over her inability to procure sea-air and medical advice for a little sick brother, who seemed likely to be released by a consumption from the impending woes of starvation. Rose, Clara, Helen, and Amelia, unanimously agreed with mamma, that comfort was a very comfortable thing; that a carriage is a mode of locomotion preferable to an umbrella and pattens in rainy weather; and competence an indispensable basis to the exercise of every Christian virtue. With that inestimable parent, indeed, fortitude and patience had been all in all; but they had no objection to display *their* excellence in some other branch of goodness. All four were accustomed to say and sing in harmonious quartette, that a love-match was a crying evil.

The consequences of this rash judgment may easily be predicted. No sooner did they arrive at marrying years, than Cupid avenged himself by uniting Rose with a recruiting Captain of Dragoons, who was not so much as cousin to a Sir Vavasor; Helen with the grandson of a Welch baronet, the head of the family being heir to six hundred per annum; and Clara, the lovely Clara, with a young clergyman, waiting for a living from an Irish Marquis, to whose whelphood he had been travelling tutor!

For three successive springs did Mrs. Kendal renew her tears on packing up the slender *trousseaux* of her misguided girls; when Captain and Mrs. Stretton set off for their quarters at Sunderland, when Mr. and Mrs. Madoc Williams departed for their cottage in Cardiganshire; when the Reverend Montagu and Mrs. Langston jingled off in a hack post-chaise to their curacy in Lincolnshire. She had very little patience with the merits of her three sons-in-law. It was enough for

her that her graceful, gentle, lovely girls were gone to darn away their lives as she had done before them; to be sworn at on rainy days, and to bring forth unwelcome children.

"Amelia!" she exclaimed, on more than one occasion to her remaining girl, (her favourite if the truth must be told—for her health had been more delicate than the rest, more resembling that of the consumptive little brother than the robustness of Captain Kendal of the —th, or Lieut. Kendal of H. M. S. Orion; Bob, the Lombard Street clerk, Henry, the writer at Bombay, or Vavasor, or Fred., the two grammar-school urchins still in leather caps and corduroys) "Amelia! dearest, beware of letting your feelings run away with you as your sisters have done. My sweet child, you are not strong enough to rough it like the rest of them. You are not fit for privations and fatigue. Be wise in time; do not dance so often with Bob's friend, that young ensign of the Guards. Three times I have been tormented into giving my consent against my better judgment. Amelia,—I will never—*never* sanction *your* marriage with a man unable to maintain you.—Think better of it; consider what it is to consign your youth to drudgery and mortification, unsupported by the consent and blessing of a mother. Think better of it, dearest Amelia;—and do not dance with Charles Beverley again."

It may be doubted whether Miss Kendal's thinkings on the subject were for the "better" or worse. But in the sequel, Ensign Beverley of his Majesty's Coldstream Guards, took his departure for London per Bath mail three weeks before the expiration of his leave of absence;—Mr. Allanby, of Allanby Hall, having arrived in the interim for the cure of his gout; with a letter of introduction to the Kendals from their relative Sir Vavasor, the neighbour of his own estates in the County of Westmoreland.

The graceful and elegant character of Amelia's beauty proved irresistible to old Allanby; the "measureless content" gathered within compass of old Allanby's ten thousand a-year, proved irresistible to Amelia. The bells of the Abbey Church soon chimed in honour of their nuptials. Curate Langston arrived on the top of

a cross country coach to perform the ceremony; Mrs. Kendal for once smiled over the packing of a daughter's wedding clothes; and all the smaller coteries of Bath were lost in horror and contempt of so venal an alliance They could hardly swallow the bride-cake for sneering at the baseness of the bride.

CHAPTER II.

Earlier things do seem as yesterday,
But I've no recollection of the hour
They gave my hand to Aldobrand.

MATURIN.

We have already stated that Amelia was fair and gentle; and those who saw her depart in her stately equipage for Allanby Hall by the side of the man to whom she had just vowed before the altar,—love, honour, and obedience—the man with a short pigtail and long rent-roll—would probably upbraid our phrase as far short of her claims to admiration.

By the side of Mr. Allanby, she did, indeed, appear an angel; for nothing could be more awkward and ungainly than his personal appearance. That very girlishness which formed, in the opinion of the many the real objection to the match, seemed to augment when her slight figure and delicate features were opposed in close contrast to those of the son of Anak to whom she had been tempted to unite herself. On her arrival at the old Hall, the gray-headed steward and housekeeper treated her as a child; while the Westmoreland bumpkins invariably qualified her as "the Missie." There was in fact nothing matronly about Amelia. She had been the youngest of the girls, the pet, the subordinate; had never been admitted to family consultations, nor instructed in the forms and customs of society. Her

mother was too actively busied in domestic duties to attend to the formation of her mind. Her brother John had taught her to write and draw,—her sister Rose to read;—Helen had been her preceptress of the needle;—while Clara, who was a bit of a blue, undertook the department of the belles lettres; and whereas little Amelia became a beautiful dancer by dint of watching her elder brothers and sisters, she was left to become a Christian by the operation of *following* them to church. But the lessons there inculcated, were neither explained nor deeply imprinted in her young heart; and at the moment of her election to the sovereignty of Allanby Hall, with its powers and privileges of good and evil, it would have been difficult to point out a young person whose moral principles were more vague, or whose ignorance of books and men more positive. Instinct had done something for her; but instinct is a blind guide for the labyrinths of the nineteenth century. She was a pretty, pleasing, elegant good-humoured, well intentioned girl; but was *that* a wife for Mr. Allanby of Allanby,—a man in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and hundred and sixteenth of his judgment?

The project of his marriage with Amelia did not, we must admit, indicate this superhuman maturity of intellect. Marriages are not always dependant on the understanding of the hes or shes by whom they are perpetrated; and whether made in heaven or elsewhere, it appears that the contracting parties have little share in the act and deed. Almost every philosopher of ancient and modern times has been blessed or cursed with a disproportionate helpmate; but from Socrates to Milton, from Milton to Byron, never was there a genius more indiscreetly mated than the esquire of Allanby.

Considered, however, in any other relation of life than as the husband of Amelia Kendal, he was a highly estimable and highly esteemed man;—a man of superior endowments,—of elevated mind,—of lofty purposes. He had won a name in the senate, almost in the *history* of his country: was the originator of several important institutions, and the projector of various permanent benefits to his native county. Although in some mea-

sure removed from public life by that foe to patrician activity an hereditary and invincible gout, his counsels were still sought by the guardians of the national welfare, his opinions quoted and his arbitration respected. Mr. Allanby of Allanby, was known to have refused a peerage; to have declined in more than one instance a post in the administration; and to have tamed down political feuds, where nothing but the ascendency of a strong mind and unblemished name would have sanctioned his interference. Though the urgency of his public and private studies had tended to seclude him during his youth and maturity, from that influence of female society which might have rendered his manners more indicative of the superiority of his mind, he had still enough of chivalrous feeling warm in his heart to be captivated by the extreme loveliness of the youthful cousin of his neighbour Sir Vavasor Kendal; and to fancy that so fair a creature could not prove unworthy of transmitting to posterity the name of Allanby, of that ilk. The circumstances of his grave face and lofty reputation, had hitherto secured him from all cognizance of the extensive class of "pretty, pleasing, good-humoured, inoffensive,"—empty-headed, trifling, indolent girls, who throng the quadrille-dancing coteries of Bath and London. All such angelic insipidities having naturally kept aloof from a man with spectacles on nose, and pigtail on wig, he was quite incapable of conceiving the tediousness of light conversation,—the heavy weight of frivolity,—the dispiriting dulness of empty gaiety. *He* had nothing to say which Amelia could understand,—she had not a word to utter which he did not wish unsaid. While listening during his marriage tour to the puzzling no-meaning of her remarks, and noticing with wonder her false deductions of deficiency of observation, the sober bridegroom recurred with amazement to the smiles and attention he had seen bestowed upon her discourse in certain evening parties of which she was the ornament. Concluding that these tributes were rendered to the charms of her conversation, he overlooked the magnetism existing between the bright blue eyes and ruby lips of beautiful eighteen, and the infatuated and adoring heart of five and twenty.

Had Mr. Allanby been thirty-three years younger in wit and wisdom, even *he* perhaps might have discovered merit (at least the merit of *naivete*) in the childish inanity of Amelia's comments. But before they reached Westmoreland, he had begun to hope that Mrs. Allanby would be too much engrossed by domestic pursuits and the duties of her station, to interfere with his occupations. Without indulging for a moment the chimerical notion of commencing her education anew, of strengthening the feebleness of her mind, or cultivating and enlarging the faculties of her heart, he contented himself with trusting she would divide her time between that portion of the libraries of Messrs. Ebers, Andrews, and Bull, comprehended under the octavo branch of "Novels and Romances, Poetry and the Drama," which she avowed as her favourite branch of literature; and the execution of a considerable variety of fairy-like garlands and bouquets of satin stitch, such as had been pointed out to him as miraculous on the handkerchiefs and collerettes of her sisters and mother. He was no advocate for music. Even had Amelia's been of a higher order than the noisy variations which four years of Bath instruction enabled her to rattle through, he would have preferred a quiet house. But reading and working, working and reading, with the beautiful gardens and scenery of Allanby for recreation, might suffice to keep his angel fully occupied for the remainder of his, if not of her own days. An annual visit to Bath for the benefit of his gout, would at once gratify her with the society of her own family, and supersede all necessity for London: a place of which Amelia knew nothing, and which her husband was anxious to forget.

Mean while, if the Westmoreland worthy felt disappointed in the result of his matrimonial experiment, Amelia was scarcely less disagreeably disenchanted of her dream. In persuading herself to accept Mr. Allanby, she had pictured with a glowing imagination the delights that opulence would add to the pleasure she had hitherto enjoyed. She forgot that these delights were to be tasted at a distance from her family; that the magnificent home to which she must remove would be uncheered by the brother-and-sisterly hilarity which

had of late years rendered hers so cheerful; that the cordiality of affection in which she had hitherto existed must end; and that instead of the familiar tenderness of eleven human creatures, warm with the life blood beating in her own heart, all must henceforward be stately, formal, and uncongenial. Little did she imagine that the dreary grandeur of Allanby Hall would teach her to regret the littered parlour and hand-to-mouth raggedness of the noisy, merry, loving home of her childhood. She had been brought up in the frankness of a large family circle; where every thing may be said, because nothing is critically or harshly considered; she had no notion of the conventional hypocrisies of good-breeding, and was induced to condole with Mr. Allanby upon the extreme dulness of his residence and meagreness of his neighbourhood, as sincerely as if they were not dear and sacred in his eyes as a family heritage of four hundred years' antiquity!

But Mr. Allanby possessed the indulgence inseparable from good sense; and felt that he had no right to be angry with the defects of a person he had removed from her congenial sphere. Instead of taunting his wife with a remark that the neighbouring villages being his own, he had taken care to secure them from the small squirearchy, and gossiping widow, and spinsterhood,—the retired attorneys and aspiring nobodies, forming the material of those nightly card-tables and dances on the carpet, which presented poor Amelia's *beau ideal* of cheerfulness and social enjoyment;—instead of bespeaking her respect for the dignity which *she* called dulness,—he kindly promised to animate their domestic circle with the presence of his sister Lady Carmychael, and her two daughters; under whose sanction and advice he fancied the inexperienced Amelia would soon qualify herself to do the honours of his house to the dignitaries of the county.

But, alas! the arrival of these three lofty dames tended only to increase a thousand fold the embarrassment and sense of weariness experienced by Mrs. Allanby. Lady Carmychael was a well-bred automaton, wound up to go through the evolutions of human life without pause or deviation. Wholly destitute of feeling, she had never swerved by the millionth fraction of an inch

from the rectilinear routine of exact decorum;—and having always anticipated that her distinguished brother, should he venture on matrimony, would ally himself with some woman of fortune, family, and fashion, she deported herself towards Amelia as towards the Mrs. Allanby of her predictions. She knew her sister-in-law to be a near relative of an ancient Baronet of the county; and therefore conversed with her exclusively concerning London and its coteries,—the court and its etiquettes.

Priscilla Carmychael, the elder of her ladyship's two daughters, a discreet maiden of two and forty, assailed the unfortunate bride on a similar principle, although in a contrary direction. Old Prissy was what is termed a "very superior woman;" on the strength of which designation, she had been talking unintelligibly, and rendering herself disagreeable, for thirty tedious years. Deeply imbued with a sense of her own eminence, whether of birth or understanding, she fancied she was remaining single in compliment to her own scrupulous fastidiousness; that every young man of consideration in the neighbourhood had secretly aspired to her hand, and been withheld from the presumption of a proposal by the dignity with which she repressed their pretensions. How could it occur to the mind of a woman so self-enamoured, that she was as ugly and repellant as a Gorgon?—or that her affected youthfulness, and factitious smiles and blushes, had long afforded a subject of caricature and derision to the rising generation of the county of Westmoreland?

The only "superior person," whose intellect the prim Priscilla regarded as at all worthy to match with her own, was that of her maternal uncle of Allanby Hall; and as unfortunately for him and her the canon law and every other law interposed to forbid their union, she entertained very little doubt, that whenever he should have leisure to wed, he would select a wife on the very model of his intellectual niece;—some middle-aged lady addicted to making extracts from Locke, and scribbling annotations in treatises of political economy. That Mrs. Allanby could be an ignoramus or a pretty silly little girl, never entered into her calculations, and she accordingly attacked Amelia, as the aunt who could,

should, or might have been; struck her dumb with syllogisms; and walked her twice round the flower-garden in the course of a single sentence of many members, enlarging on the powers and characteristics of the human mind. Mrs. Allanby concluding the poor old soul to be demented, listened with the wonderstruck air of a New Zealander recently caught; no longer marvelling that Prissy, at forty-two, was still Miss Carmychael.

It was useless, however, to turn for consolation and companionship to the younger sister. Lucinda was one of the rigidly righteous; the correspondent of half a dozen controversial magazines; a speaker at missionary societies; an examining visiter to all the school-houses of the district;—in short, a modern saint, deficient only in the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. *Her* faith consisted in a doctrinal jargon; her hope, in the presumption of spiritual pride; her charity in the vain-gloriousness of ostentation. Christian humility and Christian forbearance, the mild virtue that vaunteth not itself,—and the active but silent fulfilment of the duties of domestic life,—were of course beneath the notice of the pattern woman. She had no leisure to read or write for the benefit of her purblind, purdeaf old mother. She was herself too much of a teacher and preacher, to listen to the exhortations of the ministers of the faith appointed for her instruction. She went to church to cavil; and came from it with the pride of the Pharisee and the ignorance of the Sadducee. On finding that Mrs. Allanby did not subscribe to a single religious association, and had never attended a missionary meeting, she gave her over to perdition. A Lucinda Carmychael could not waste *her* valuable time in conversation with one so deficient in the rudiments of saintly discussion.

In short, three harder and less humanized individuals never wore the external attributes of womanhood. Mr. Allanby, indeed, loved them all,—for they were his own; and even if he chanced to note their peculiarities of mind and manners, regarded them at worst as respectable weaknesses, far less objectionable than the flighty levity and perilous worldliness of the fair ones, with whom his earlier career of London life had brought him in contact. Satisfied that with three female companions

of so high an order of virtue and understanding, his young wife could have nothing to desire in the way of society, he betook himself quietly to his library chair, to renew his statistical calculations and financial estimates. He had nothing farther to look forward to but the birth of his child, (an event already in prospect,) and to hope that it might prove a son as beautiful as its mother, and as "superior" as the rest of its female relatives.

CHAPTER III.

As lamps burn silent with unconscious light,
So modest ease in beauty shines most bright;
Unaiming charms with edge resistless fall,
And she who means no mischief does it all.

AARON HILL.

POOR Amelia, on the contrary, found much to look for, much to desire. It was true she had carriages, servants, plate, jewels, and showy apparel; but what were all these without the power of imparting pleasure and enjoying the sympathy of those she loved?—The Carmychaels, accustomed from their birth to similar indulgencies, were unconscious of their existence. Luxury was to them a necessary attribute of their station; and as to their High Mightinesses the Tuftons, and other stately country neighbours who were in the habit of formal visits to Allanby Hall, Amelia soon discovered how much they despised the insignificance of her air and insipidity of her conversation. They had not even the propitiating task of pitying and patronising the young and timid bride; for the Carmychaels boasted a pre-existent monopoly of those gratifying offices.

There was but one person, in short, of all the new connexions acquired on her marriage, with whom she felt

inclined or was encouraged to communicate freely. This was a very insignificant individual—still more insignificant than herself; a woman who was neither young, handsome, rich, high-born, accomplished, nor brilliant; but who, in spite of these negations, was gifted to overflowing with the one thing needful—a mild, humane, self-denying, all-forbearing Christian spirit: contented, though lacking the adventitious prosperities of life; happy, through the happiness of others; blessed, through virtues all her own. Such was Jane Esthope, the daughter of a former incumbent of the vicarage of Allanby; on whose decease she was admitted, by the liberality of the master of the Hall, to inhabit a small farm-house on the outskirts of the village; a woman passing rich, with an income of something less than a hundred a-year; and pleasing in her aspect, in spite of a pock-fretted face and deformed person. The loveliness of benevolence shone through her large dark spaniel-like eyes, and imparted a grace to her whole person.

When first poor Jane was pointed out at Church to Mrs. Allanby, of Allanby, her mean stature, duffle cloak, and straw bonnet, said little in her favour. It was not likely to occur to the girlish Amelia (still dazzled by the glittering prospects of ten thousand a-year) that much of the happiness of her future life could depend on so unimportant a person. She had not yet learned how soothing, how necessary, is the balm of sweet counsel, even to those who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. She did not dream that the formality of Allanby Hall, and the awful dignity of the three Carmychaels, would very soon induce her to slip away unattended and unnoticed; and hastily traversing the two fields separating the western lodge of the Park from Moorcroft, the farm-house to which, shortly after her marriage she had been ceremoniously introduced by her husband, seat herself cozily in Jane Esthope's ingle-nook, to talk to her,—no! not *talk*,—to *gossip* with her, concerning her mother, her brothers, and sisters;—listening in her turn to Jane's history of her yesterday's churning,—of the smut in farmer Brown's barley, and the stoats which had wrought such devastation in Goody Denham's poultry-yard.

To be sure there was something in Moorcroft which might have attracted visiters from even a more cheerful home than Allanby Hall! The farm was constructed within the ruins of the ancient Abbey, of Allanby, on the precipitous banks of the river Greta; taking, in its internal arrangements, the imposing form of its Gothic precursor. The hall, as it was termed (a chamber uniting both kitchen and parlour,) was formed out of the refectory of the monastery,—the Gothic recesses of which were converted into presses, the receptacles of Jane's household stores, her homespun and homemade. The ruins of the old cloisters still formed the boundary of her little domain; her bantams roosted on the grim effigy of an early Abbot; and the herbary which rendered her honey the boast of the neighbourhood and her medicine chest the general resort of the poor, exhaled its spicy fragrance under the self-same southern wall which sheltered of yore the early esculents of the luxurious monks. Her grapes clustered round fancifully carved capitals of Saxon columns;—her China roses blossomed between "a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille," of hoary granite;—her bee-hives were ranged beneath the arch of a retiring window, once rich with a gorgeous variegation of deep-stained Flemish glass;—and the paved court, from whence her dove-cote sent up its flight of fantails, cardinals, and capuchins, into the clear blue sky, was consecrated by a tessellation of emblematic cross-bones and skulls, crowning the "hic jacets" of the Franciscan brotherhood of Allanby.

The modern tenant of this romantic abode, remained, in defiance of its associations, one of the most matter-of-fact persons in the world. *Her* world, however, was contained in the village of Allanby, in which she was born; and which she had only quitted on three occasions, to seek at Edinburgh the medical advice necessary to counteract in her youth the increase of her personal deformities. Fortunately, her parents survived till Jane was of age to undertake the control of an independent household; and though, on the decease of the Vicar, a home had been offered her by her only sister, (who was married to an opulent London tradesman,) she gladly accepted Mr. Allanby's offer to put the old house at Moorcroft in tenantable repair for her use; and settled herself, with an old man and woman, two infirm ser-

vants of her father's house, to assume or rather pursue her vocation as a second Providence to all the sick and sorrowful of the parish of Allanby.

Yet even among the poorest of her neighbours, sne was only "Jane Esthope." No one ever thought of disguising her by the name of Miss, or Madam:—the heroine of Miss Baillie's tragedy, "the noble Jane de Montfort," was not held more proudly superior to common forms of respect, than the little crooked, bright-faced being, who came smiling to her gate to welcome the young wife of Allanby; and who, having seated her in the wicker chair of ceremony, rejoiced in the sight of her beauty and the sound of her sweet voice, without remembering how honoured was her lowly dwelling by the presence of the lady of the hall. Amelia had sought her out, encouraged by some accidental meeting on an errand of benevolence, at her own good pleasure; and Jane saw so much that was cheering and beautiful in the prospects of Moorcroft, and the superiority of her flowers and poultry, that she did not wonder they should interest the attention of the mistress of all the conservatories and aviaries of the great house. That her angel-guest was not happy amid those splendours was a flight of fancy beyond her level. Mr. Allanby reigned in her mind as the most exalted of human beings; and she would have regarded a princess deserving congratulation on becoming his wife. To be mistress of Allanby,—beautiful, heaven-favoured Allanby, the glory of the earth, and the paradise of her experience,—was, indeed, a destiny reserved for the favourite of fortune.

Without sufficient discernment of mind to comprehend the meritoriousness of Jane Esthope's character,—of her cheerfulness under prolonged sickness and habitual infirmities, of the tender mercies which limited her personal comforts, and taxed her slender fortunes,—Amelia was soothed by the sight of her radiant countenance, and the influence of her cordial nature. Many a lesson of wisdom did she unconsciously imbibe from the lips of one who was herself acquainted with only two sources of instruction—the Book of Truth and the face of nature. Mrs. Allanby became wiser and better during a half hour's visit to Moorcroft, than after a whole day's schooling from the literary Priscilla, or the controversial Lucinda. She was only aware, however, of

becoming happier; for it was to Jane Esthope alone she ventured to prattle respecting her sister Stretton's apprehensions that her little boy had got the measles,—Mrs. Madoc Williams's anticipations of an heir-apparent that was to precede the hope of Allanby,—and her own anxiety that some tidings should reach her parents concerning the safety of the Orion frigate and its second Lieutenant, which for two years past had been cruising in mysterious silence in the Indian seas.

Lady Carmychael, mean while, regarded her sister-in-law as strangely addicted to pedestrian exercise, and hinted her wish that Mrs. Allanby would not take such *very* long walks in the park without "one of the *young ladies* to bear her company;" till Amelia began to tremble lest she should be deprived of the comfort of unrestrained intercourse with her kind good Jane. But she had nothing to fear. Prissy had now decided that her youthful aunt was a fool, and wholly unworthy her society and conversation; and Lucinda was busied in converting an asthmatic tailor, who lived at a village three miles off, the shining light of a virulent sect of ranters. Every morning she drove over in her pony cart, laden with decoction of squills and works of controversial divinity, for the cure of his spiritual and physical ailments, and was seldom to be seen at the Hall.

It was one bright day in April, after an absence of four or five, (a *long* absence for one who was in the habit of at least a five minutes' parley over the gate every morning of the week,) that Amelia passed the threshold of Moorcroft; and without interrupting Jane Esthope's occupation, who was busy sorting flax for distribution among the poor, seated herself beside an open casement round which the gay flowers of the mezereon and corcorus were already clustering.

"I have not been here since Thursday," said she in a mournful tone. "We have had a terrible large party at the Hall."

"I met a carriage and four with the Tufton arms the other day, as I was returning from the West Lodge poor-houses," observed Jane, who had never in her life entered the Hall as a guest, and had no more notion of being invited there than of a presentation at Court.

"Lady Sophia Tufton and her family were with us

three days; and we had my father's cousin, Sir Vavasor Kendal and his son, besides several other people."

"A large pleasant party?——"

"Yes! Lady Carmychael thought it very pleasant. I heard her tell Mr. Allanby it went off 'vastly well, considering;' but I don't know,—it seemed very stiff and unsociable after our Bath parties."

"Bath must be a very gay place," said Jane; "they tell me it is almost as large as Edinburgh."

"It is a very beautiful city; and yet when I happened to mention to one of the Miss Tuftons that I had never been in London, and had lived at Bath, she seemed so surprised; and said to her sister, 'I did not know people lived at Bath; I fancied one only went for the season.' And the next time I was alone with Lady Carmychael she begged me as a particular favour never again to mention that I was brought up at such a place; or that I never lived in town.—'People will find it out quite soon enough,' she said; 'and it would vex my brother to know that the Tuftons had been sneering at his wife."

"But *did* they sneer?"

"They looked at each other, but said not a word."

"Sir Vavasor Kendal must have been aware that you are not a Londoner."

"He knows very little of us; and yet, but for his introduction of Mr. Allanby, I should never have seen Westmoreland," said Mrs. Allanby with a deep sigh.

"You must love him for that!" cried Jane, glowing with the minor patriotism of love of county.—

"He seems very amiable and gracious."

"And were his sons with him?—Colonel Kendal is one of our members, and is thought a very great man."

"So he seemed. He sat whispering every evening with the Miss Tuftons and Lady Sophia, till I almost fancied they were laughing at me."

"Dear, dear Mrs. Allanby,—laughing at *you!* How could you fancy such a thing?" said Jane, aghast at the notion.

"Indeed it was only my cousin Vavasor who condescended to take the least notice of me. I remember he came once to Bath, and used to dance with my sister Rose, when I was a little girl. And he asked me *so* many questions about home; and remembered all my

brothers. I like Vavasor very much. I walked with him every morning; I almost thought of bringing him to visit you."

"I should have been very glad to see him."

"But I sometimes think, that if Lady Carmychael and her daughters knew of my coming here so often, and how happy I am at Moorcroft, they would want to come too; and they *are* so very disagreeable!"

"Surely, they will soon be leaving the Hall?"

"Yes; I heard Miss Lucinda tell the Tuftons they should meet in town after Easter; and Vavasor seemed surprised when he found *we* were not going too. My cousin assures me I should be enchanted with London. But I am satisfied I should feel still more lonely there than at Allanby; for I know nobody in town but my brother Bob, whose time is taken up with business; and here I have you, Jane,—whom, next to mamma and my sisters, I love better than any body."

"You are very good to say so," said Jane Esthope, warmly; "but in London you would soon gain plenty of fine friends."

Amelia sighed:—those she had acquired since her marriage gave her little anxiety to increase the number. "I want no new friends," said she. "Perhaps next year some of my brothers and sisters may be invited to Allanby, and it will not be so dull then;—I shall have my baby to show them. How delightful it will be to bring them all here some morning! Helen draws beautifully, and will make me a sketch of Moorcroft. Poor Helen lost *her* little girl:—I shall be quite grieved for her, Jane, when she first sees mine."

"But is yours to be a little girl?—*We* in the village want an heir for Allanby Hall."

"Oh! no, no,—a dear little girl, who will always be with me—never leave me. I shall wish for no company then. Dear, dear Jane, think how happy I shall be when——"

"When you find that I have at last discovered your retreat!" cried a voice from the window. "Pardon me for venturing hither; but those two ferocious dragons, the Miss Carmychaels, informed me you were wandering somewhere about the park, and I gave my horse leave to follow you."

"He was very clever to find his way to Moorcroft,"

said Mrs. Allanby, blushing deeply as the face and figure of a very fine young man of five and twenty appeared at the casement; "I hope you have tied him at the gate, so that he may not trample the flower-beds. Jane, this is my cousin Vavasor."

"Pray walk in, Mr. Kendal," said Jane Esthope, smoothing her apron, and laying aside her flax to make way for the brother of the county member. "You are heartily welcome to Moorcroft."

CHAPTER IV.

Millions of false eyes
Are stuck upon thee! Volumes of reports
Run with their false and most contrarious quests
Upon thy doings.

SHAKSPEARE.

"THAT was a devilish pretty woman who kissed her forefinger to you so graciously just now!" said Lord Seafield to Colonel Kendal, as they were riding together in Hyde Park, exactly five years after the foregoing conversation. "Amazingly graceful figure on horseback—best seat I ever saw,—beats Mrs. Wilmot and the Marchioness hollow."

"'Tis the wife of my brother member old Allanby, and a sort of relation of my own."

"Old Allanby?—Ay—ay—I remember he married some pretty school-girl just before I went to the Mediterranean; but one heard nothing of her then?"

"No;—he kept her caged in Westmoreland for a year or two;—and a more moping little linnet you never beheld. But the Tuftons, finding at that rate she would be no possible acquisition to them—(Tufton Castle, you know, is scarcely half a dozen miles from Allanby)—good-naturedly took her into training; and soon managed to teach her the use of ten thousand a-year

and a pair of the bluest eyes that ever rivalled a Neapolitan sky."

"And what said old Allanby to the fruits of the lesson?—"

"Faith! not much. He is too profound a thinker to be a great talker, and is now so afflicted with the gout that he has not leisure for the exercise of much authority. A year or two ago, when Lady Carmychael died, I fancy my brother Vavasor flattered himself the old senator had some thoughts of becoming her *compagnon de voyage* over the Styx."

"Your brother *flattered* himself!—Why, what has he to do with the business?"

"Nothing, except being madly in love with the lady yonder on the gray mare."

"Indeed! nothing else?"

"No: her family take great care of her. That young Kendal of the Blues is a brother of hers; old Allanby got him his commission."

"And Captain Kendal of the Salsette, whom I met at Cerigo?——"

"An elder brother:—all country cousins of ours. One of her sisters is married to Colonel Stretton, who is going out with a good appointment on Lord Combermere's Staff; and another is the wife of Archdeacon Langston. They are a sad slow set; and were it not for pretty little Mrs. Allanby I should never recognise their existence."

"I wonder Allanby allows her to amuse herself so well. See!—she has got Sir Michael Crosbie, and Connaught, and Lochvardine, and all the *roues* in her train."

"She does what she likes with the old man. He is so taken up with the education of his two boys, (two fine creatures, who, in spite of their beauty are the image of himself,) that he interferes but little in *her* proceedings. She is quite adored in Westmoreland. My sister Lady Emlyn, and the Tuftons, have put her on the popularity scent; and by dint of a few balls, public days, private races, and all that sort of things, they contrived to get Allanby solicited to stand again for the county."

"An application which few men resist. They forget that it is almost as easy to pack a county as a jury."

"The election cost him a few acres of his old oaks, notwithstanding. But it secured the main point, a house-in-town for Mrs. Allanby: which being in Berkeley Square and endowed with a tolerably good cook, we all find it amazingly convenient. She has too many brothers about her at present; but Lady Emlyn has cured her of half her provincialisms, and in time may do away with that."

"Lady Emlyn is an experienced preceptress," said Lord Seafield with a smile of a peculiar kind; "quite an adept in the arts and sciences of May Fair."

"Ay, ay!" cried the fashionable brother, "I am delighted to see her exercise her genius for tuition on other men's wives; but I shall take care to prevent her teaching treason to mine."

"Yours!—Have *you* any thoughts of the noose?"

"You will see it fairly knotted before the end of the season, and in a cable of gold. After all, my dear Seafield, I am compelled to part with myself to Miss Cresset, the Clapham heiress. She and her father are both most afflictingly in love with me;—*he* with my radical speeches in the House, *she* with my occasional stanzas in the annuals;—*he* fancies me a rampant democrat,—*she* believes me to be a 'feeling, stealing,—banish, vanish,—cherish, perish,'—sort of mule-bird, between Byron and Moore."

"What has she down?——"

"A hundred thousand to a commoner, and twice as much to a peer."

"So much for the Clapham democrat!—You had better turn her over to *me*, 'exchanging and receiving the difference;' which arrangement would clear accounts for both of us; and *I* could shut her up in my old tumble-down castle on Lough Swilly, whereas you will never get rid of her farther than Westmoreland."

"Thank you!" cried Kendal, laughing heartily; "but I have ulterior views. I shall drink old Cresset to death with Maraschino punch in the course of a year or two,—and then——"

"Well, well! if you happen to have a settlement-squabble with your heiress,

"In the sweet pangs of it remember *me!*"

If they exact a longer rent-roll than you can produce, *I* have one which would snip into measures for the regimentals of Napoleon's army; and if it *should* help to buy me an heiress, why, upon my soul! 'tis the first time I ever derived a shilling's worth of advantage from it. But here is Lady Emlyn."

"Kendal! do I meet you at the Tuftons' to-night?" inquired a very handsome, showy woman, riding towards her brother.

"What are we to have?—*Tableaux* and *petits jeux?*"

"No! a ball; their cards have been out this month past."

"Then I am particularly engaged. I never bore myself with those general congregations; nothing ever proves worth going to but an *impromptu*. Seafield,—*you* are a ball man,—will you take my place?"

"Thank you, I am going in my own; and shall certainly appeal to Lady Emlyn's good-nature to present me to Mrs. Allanby."

"Mrs. Allanby!" cried her ladyship, with an involuntary elevation of the eyebrow, "you must ask my brother Vavasor's leave, not mine. My fair cousin has long been out of *my* leading strings; and is not only able to go alone, but runs faster than most people."

"Well, well! *I* will meet you at the Tuftons, if Letitia (my golden goddess) should release me for the evening," said Colonel Kendal, riding off with his sister, who had turned her horse's head in a contrary direction. "I want to hear one unbiassed opinion of Mrs. Allanby."

It must be owned that five years form an awful lapse in human life:—a lapse whose hours and minutes leave no where a trace more sharp and injurious than on the minds and countenances of individuals involved in the buzzing, stinging gnatswarms of fashionable life.—Elsewhere, existence marches with a more dignified step, and the scenes pictured among the records of our memory assume a grander aspect; they lie in masses,—their shadows are broader,—their lights more brilliantly thrown out. But reminiscences of a life of ton are as vexatious as they are frivolous. The season of 1829 differs from that of 1830, only, inasmuch, as its quad-

rilles are varied with galoppes as well as waltzes, and danced at Lady A's. and Lady B's.,—instead of the Duchess of D's., and Countess E's. The Duchess is dead,—the Countess ruined;—but no matter!—there are still plenty of balls to be had. "Another and another still succeeds!" Since young ladies *will* grow up to be presented, lady-mothers and aunts *must* continue to project breakfasts, water parties, and galas, whereby to throw them in the way of flirtation, courtship, and marriage. Mischief, in her most smiling mask, sits like the beautiful witch in Thalaba at an everlasting spinning-wheel, weaving a mingled yarn of sin and sorrow for the daughters of Fashion. Although the caldron of Hecate and her priestesses has vanished from the heath at Forres, it bubbles in nightly incantations among the elm trees of Grosvenor Square; and Hopper and Hellway, Puckle and Stradling, now croak forth their chorus of rejoicing where golden lamps swing blazing over the écarté tables, and the soft strains of the Mazurka enervate the atmosphere of the gorgeous temples of May Fair.

Never yet was there a woman *really* improved in attraction by mingling with the motley throng of the *beau monde*. She may learn to dress better, to step more gracefully; her head may assume a more elegant turn, her conversation become more polished, her air more distinguished;—but in point of *attraction* she acquires nothing. Her simplicity of mind departs;—her generous, confiding impulses of character are lost;—she is no longer inclined to interpret favourably of men or things,—she listens without believing,—sees without admiring; has suffered persecution without learning mercy;—and been taught to mistrust the candour of others by the forfeiture of her own. The freshness of her disposition has vanished with the freshness of her complexion; hard lines are perceptible in her very soul, and crowsfeet contract her very fancy. No longer pure and fair as the statue of alabaster, her beauty, like that of some painted waxen effigy, is tawdry and meretricious. It is not alone the rouge upon the cheek and the false tresses adorning the forehead, which repel the ardour of admiration; it is the artificiality of mind with which such efforts are connected, that breaks the spell of beauty.

Amelia, wandering in her girlish matronhood among the groves of Allanby Park, spotless as Una and confiding as Miranda, was, perhaps, as lovely and graceful a being as ever smiled upon the earth. Amelia, in her diamond tiara and satin robe, arrayed in the most fastidious refinement of Parisian fashion, smiling affectedly as she seemed to lend an absent ear to the flatteries of Lord Connaught at the entrance of Lady Sophia Tufton's ball-room, was, perhaps, the most striking person of all that patrician assemblage. But she was not now the beauty whose faintest whisper could make the heart beat,—whose downcast eyes had eloquence to stir every feeling within her lover's heart. She was in fact "the fashionable Mrs. Allanby," she was no longer "Amelia."

Yet no one had a right to complain of the results and consequences of her marriage. It had fulfilled every expected, every predicted purpose. Her father was not only in the habit of making a long, annual, autumnal visit at Allanby Hall, but had been welcomed, solely in consequence of this new alliance, to the home of his forefathers,—the seat of Sir Vavasor Kendal; and he knew that it was the interest of the honourable member for Westmoreland which had given a step to his naval and military sons, an arch-deaconry to his son-in-law Langston, a lucrative appointment in India to his son-in-law Stretton, and a commission in the Blues to Amelia's favourite brother—the handsome Frederick. Poor Mrs. Kendal (still anchored at Bath by the selfishness of the ci-devant elegant young man) was satisfied by the frequency and magnificence of Mrs. Allanby's gifts,—the India shawls, velvet dresses, and silk cloaks, supplied by her pin-money to her still beloved mother,—that she must be the darling of prosperity, and consequently the happiest of women; and her sisters, although during their formal visit to Westmoreland they could not help secretly pitying poor Amelia's incapability of romanticizing about Mr. Allanby, as they did about their "dear Stretton," or "charming Madoc," or "precious Langston," were at least compelled to admit, that her two fine boys were the paragons of the family, that her husband was all indulgence, and her life all sunshine.

Even Mr. Allanby had no reason to complain. He

had ardently desired an heir to his ancient hereditary estates; and he had now two noble sons with the name of Allanby written on their faces,—the whole family picture-gallery united in their features! Lady Carmychael had ventured to express her regrets, during the early days of his marriage, that Mrs. Allanby was not more a woman of the world; and Mrs. Allanby was now the pride of the printshops,—the quoted of the milliners,—the glory of Almacks! His niece Priscilla had been disappointed by the want of intellectuality of her new aunt; and Mrs. Allanby was now the star of the coteries,—a leading blue among the wire-wove Sapphos of May Fair. Lucinda had bewailed her lack of zeal; and Mrs. Allanby was now a weekly weeper at the Lock, and an ostensible subscriber to every Calthorpian catalogue in London. She was adored by her husband's tenants, worshipped in the county; could have suppressed an election mob sooner than the riot act, and put down a strike among the manufacturers of the district, far more easily than a squadron of dragoons. The beautiful Mrs. Allanby, of Allanby, was, in short, every thing a county member could desire in his wife.

Yet if the truth must be told, no one was completely satisfied with Amelia or her match. Her father, who for the two years succeeding her marriage, loved her far the best of his children, had now transferred his affection to the Madoc Williams, on whose grand paternal estate a copper-mine had been recently discovered, whose cook was fifty pounds a year better than Mr. Allanby's, and whose cellar he had received the satisfactory commission to stock at his own will and pleasure;—Mrs. Kendal was hurt that Amelia, who seemed fully possessed of the power to come or go, had never visited Bath to exhibit her sons and her diamonds;—her sisters had discovered, that since her extreme intimacy with the Tuftons, Lady Emlyn, and half a dozen Duchesses, she was remiss in her correspondence, and less warm in her welcome to themselves;—and her brothers, (most of whom were largely indebted to the kindness and liberality of Mr. Allanby,) felt uneasy at the publicity of her life, and the indifference it served to reveal towards *his* habits and convenience. The soldier, and the sailor, the major and the captain, being wanderers by vocation, saw little of their fashionable sister, and Henry

was still at Bombay; but Robert, the junior partner of a Lombard Street house,—Vavasor, who was reading for his degree at Cambridge with the promise of one of Mr. Allanby's best livings,—and above all, Frederick, the gay, gallant, handsome Fred. whom the old gentleman loved almost as a son, and had put forward in the world with fatherly liberality,—were often tempted to remonstrate with their lovely sister on her neglect of her husband's domestic comforts, on her excessive dissipation and perilous intimacy with their cousin Lady Emlyn.

"What *can* you know of such things?" was Amelia's reply to the banker and the collegian. "You, my dear Bob, wisely limit your acquaintance with society to the rational latitudes of Bedford Square; and you, Vavasor, to the tea-parties of your hideous professors' wives, in their swansdown tippets and towy wigs. Pray let Lady Emlyn alone; she is a constellation of which *you* cannot measure the altitude."

"But I," exclaimed Frederick with spirit, "I, Amelia, who frequent the same society as yourself, and who hear and see all *you* hear and see, as well as a thousand things of which, Heaven be praised, you are ignorant,—*I* can assure you that Lady Emlyn is spoken of in a tone which, were she my sister, would drive me to distraction. You do not half know her, or you could not defend her cause."

"It *is* because I thoroughly understand her that I despise these paltry scandals. There is a new system of quackery, you must remember, which kills all half believers; but those who persevere are safe. If you would be at the trouble of cultivating Harriet's friendship, you would feel as I do that what the world calls levity is in fact mere innocence of heart."

"*Innocence!*—The playfulness of an adder sporting in the sunshine!"

"Or like Madame de Brinvillier's poisoned nosegay, whose fragrance was death."

"My old friend Beverley (Charles Beverley, Amelia, who was once so much attached to you,) assures me that Lady Emlyn is——"

"Come, come, come!" cried Mrs. Allanby, "I really will not have you so malicious. Harriet is my kindest and best friend. Had she not taken the trouble

to put me *au fait* to our county politics and rub off a little of my provincial rust, I should have still remained the clod I was when I first went down to Allanby;—terrified like a school-girl at the Carmychaels and their crew,—and reverencing poor Allanby with as much awe as if he had been an archbishop!"

"I know not that you are the happier for having learned to pay him less respect. The obligations of the family——"

"Nonsense!—Do you imagine Mr. Allanby selected me as a wife to oblige my family? The match suited him, and the obligation is mutual. Vavasor Kendal was quite angry the other day, Fred, to hear you talking publicly at mess of your gratitude to Mr. Allanby. He said he certainly would not have dined there, had he known you were going to make your family ridiculous by assuming the tone of a linen-draper thanking my lord or the squire for his gracious patronage."

"Vavasor Kendal will never expose *his* family by the sin of gratitude," cried Robert with indignation.

"Vavasor is a reprobate!" exclaimed his clerical cousin and namesake. "The similarity of names between us, has introduced me into more of his secrets than he would care to hear of."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Allanby, blushing deeply. "Are you silly enough to fancy he wishes to pass for a saint?"

"There is one person," observed Fredrick, sternly, "with whom he shall very shortly pass in his true character, if I see any cause to renew my disapprobation. Rely on it, Amelia, Mr. Allanby shall hear every syllable which reaches my ears respecting him, unless I find you moderate your intimacy with Vavasor and Lady Emlyn. They are assisting to injure your reputation far beyond your powers, of belief or redemption."

"I must beg, in the mean time," said Mrs. Allanby, "that you will intrude no advice upon *me*, which I neither seek nor require. For the future, I shall welcome none of my family or friends whom I see disposed to breed dissension in a house where they have been so hospitably received."

"Neither harsh words, nor harsh looks, my dear sister," replied Frederick, "will deter us from watching over your honour and happiness. We must take care that Cæsar's wife is not suspected."

CHAPTER V.

She enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her.
MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

It was precisely the day preceding Lady Sophia Tufton's ball, that this harassing conversation took place; and though Amelia treated the subject of her brothers' reprehensions with such lofty disdain, and boasted herself independent of their interference, she could not shake off certain feelings of alarm and irritation on the subject. She attired herself for the fête so eagerly anticipated by Lord Seafield, with a determination to speak seriously to her cousin Vavasor respecting the injurious suspicions arising from their intimacy.

But it was not always possible to talk seriously to Vavasor Kendal. He was one of those persons who seem to fancy life itself a jest, and its most peremptory business liable to be thrust aside by the levity of those who boldly defy the cares of life. He was a bad son;—but by taking care to amuse his father with the liveliness of his sallies, whenever they did happen to meet, impressed a notion on the mind of Sir Vavasor, that he was no worse than other fashionable young men of the day. He was a bad officer;—but by rendering himself extremely agreeable at mess, and rallying his brother officers into the performance of his neglected duties, he contrived to escape without much reprehension. He was deeply in debt,—yet by laughing loudly and jesting boldly on the subject, he contrived to make both himself and his creditors imagine that his engagements were on the point of liquidation. He was a bad cousin,—a bad designing cousin,—to the pretty Mrs. Allanby; but while he bantered her so freely on the rumours concerning his attachment and his projects, Amelia neither doubted nor feared his intentions. Upon all occasions, when she sought to impress on his mind the ill-natured inferences drawn by the fashionable world from their extreme intimacy, he appeared too much amused to be angry.

"The blockheads!" he exclaimed, when she earnestly requested him to avoid those familiarities by

which he exposed her conduct to injurious interpretation. "Surely, dearest Amelia, surely you do not wish to renounce the society of your poor cousin, to gratify the ill-nature of a set of peevish old dowagers and superannuated coquettes, who cannot bear to see other people happier than themselves? What harm is there, what harm *can* there be, in my taking care of you in your daily rides, now that Mr. Allanby is too infirm to be your protector?"

"There are my brothers——"

"You have only two in town:—Bob the square-toes, —who is always busy with his horrible shop."

"—And Fred.—who is as idle as yourself."

"Frederick has no horses."

"He has the use of Mr. Allanby's."

"His person is at present very little known about town,—no one is aware of his being your brother,—and a scandal would be raised on the subject, ten thousand times more mischievous than any they would dare affix on a man like myself, as well known as the pavé of St. James's Street."

"A scandal which could only rise to fall. In short, Vavasor, for the sake of my own happiness and Mr. Allanby's comfort, let me entreat you to be more guarded in your conduct."

"By heaven! I do believe," cried Vavasor, "that Lochvardine or Crosbie have been putting all these fariboles into your head;—and if I had any grounds——"

"Hush, hush!" said Amelia, apprehensive of the remarks his vehemence might excite, "every one is looking at you."

"Let them look,—let them listen! I have nothing to say which the whole world may not hear."

"But have you no regard for your cousin?"

"My cousin has no regard except for two insolent coxcombs, whose homage she prizes beyond that of a man only too truly, too unfortunately devoted to her."

"Oh! no—no!" faltered Amelia. "You are well aware, Vavasor, that *your* affection is indispensable to my happiness;—that my whole soul is centred in your friendship."

Vavasor Kendal was about to press her arm to his side in token of gratitude; but he checked himself. His affected indignation had sufficed to force from her lips

the avowal he desired; and it was therefore his policy to re-assume his usual ironical tone.

"Well!—do not let us be too heroical, where heroism is so little requisite as in a common-place cousinly attachment. Nothing is indispensable to my happiness just now but a waltz to whirl away the disagreeable impressions your homily has excited. Come, Amelia, come! Give me your arm. There—the waltz is over—how *very* provoking you are!—"

These last familiar words were overheard by Lord Seafield, who stood near them, waiting for the termination of a colloquy, apparently so interesting to the two cousins, that he might request a presentation to Mrs. Allanby, whose personal attractions far surpassed his expectations. But he now desisted. A degree of intimacy so unrestricted as to admit of *chiding*, warranted in his opinion all the insinuations of Colonel Kendal, and the sneers of Lady Emlyn; and he was more inclined to forgive the daring effrontery of that fashionable flirt, than the hypocritical meekness of one who concealed her sins under a mask of such feminine gentleness, such youthful naïveté, as Mrs. Allanby. The most dissipated men, in such cases, become the most rigorous judges.

Nor did he discern any cause for amending his verdict, after watching the conduct of the parties from fête to fête, from breakfast to breakfast, from opera to water party, from water party to those more inferential *petits comites*, where flirtations are so well heard, seen, and understood, and where what is neither heard nor seen is understood still better. Lord Seafield observed, and had no particular inducement to keep his observations to himself, that on Captain Kendal's entrance into a party graced by the presence of his beautiful cousin, Mrs. Allanby's rising colour betrayed her instantaneous cognizance of an arrival which others noted without interest or sympathy. He saw her shun the companionship of the most entertaining men and agreeable women in town, simply for the pleasure of sitting in silence beside Vavasor,—content with the gratification of seeing *him* amused by what was going on around them;—avoid all diversions in which *he* could not participate;—court the society of those only who were favoured with *his* preference;—neglect her husband, her children, herself, to minister to the vanity of a heartless libertine! On

such premises it was natural to ground an opinion that Vavasor must aspire to become lord of her destinies;—that he was either openly or secretly,

son maître,
Qui l'est, le fût, ou le doit être!

More than once he renewed his conversation on the subject with Colonel Kendal, in order to express his contempt for "poor old Allanby's blindness."

"Say not a word on that head, I beseech you," cried the brother Knight of the Shire of the deluded husband. "That hot-headed boy-cousin of ours in the Blues, wishes for nothing better than to have an excuse for shooting Vav. through the head, to punish him for the unkinsmanly deed of showing up his rawness on his first arrival in town. Not another word, I beseech you. It might nip the affair in the bud."

"No, no! at worst it could only shake the leaves from an overblown flower."

"You are mistaken; Vavasor is much too knowing a sportsman to ride over his own pack. It would suit him far better to make a wife of Allanby's widow, than a mistress of Allanby's wife. Don't for a moment suppose that an experienced man like my brother is likely to become the dupe of his own feelings."

"I do him justice; I am persuaded he has none to be made the dupe of. But that lovely woman *has*, or I am very much mistaken; and I am sorry to see her so blind a victim."

"Pray reserve your sympathy for Mrs. Kendal. I should be jealous if you pitied any one more than my own little future wife; for I have a presentiment that, as a married man, I shall prove the greatest brute in the family."

"*Et a quand la noce?*——"

"Not till the autumn. Old Cresset chooses Letitia to be of age before she is made miserable for life; and I have a Blenheim or two to break in for pheasant-shooting, which will bring my hand in famously. I mean to make the heiress a *retriever* in every sense."

"Make her Mrs. Kendal in the first instance," said Lord Seafield sneeringly.

"There's many a slip
'Twixt cup and lip,"

you know: even though the cup be of virgin gold, and the lip as greedy as your own."

Lady Emlyn's opinions, if more guardedly expressed, were not less implicatory. Judging her sex in general from her own detestable experience, she entertained no doubt of Amelia's consummate hypocrisy. The wretchedness occasionally visible in the beautiful face of the worshipped Mrs. Allanby, arising from the struggles of a feeble and ill-regulated mind writhing in the grasp of the tempter, were imputed by her cousin's interpretation to the reproaches of a peevish conscience. She hated Amelia for the want of confidence in herself which induced her to disguise the fact; and despised her for the want of firmness characterizing at once her fault and her repentance.

One morning she had been listening with an incredulous smile to Lord Seafield's observations on Mrs. Allanby's fading beauty and dispirited air, while their barge floated in luxurious indolence along that beautiful river, which, in the month of June, is charged with the burden of as many fashionable water-parties as of Newcastle colliers. "Well, well," she cried at last, as he assisted her to land on the lawn of the beautiful villa appropriated to the pleasures of the day, "she will soon have leisure to recover her lost looks and domestic habits. She is going down to Allanby in a day or two, to play the turtle-dove among the groves of Westmoreland. You might have guessed as much from Lochvardine's desponding looks."

Lord Seafield guessed no such thing; but this brief explanation served at least to solve the mystery of a conversation, which, towards the evening of that eventful day, he chanced to overhear among the shrubberies which twilight already rendered indistinct.

"But surely you will come and see us on your way to the moors?" inquired a faltering voice, of which the soft tones were now familiar to his ear.

"Not unless you promise me that I shall not be brother-pecked, as I have lately been. On my soul, Amelia! I will never enter the Hall again, unless you undertake that Frederick shall not be invited during my visit."

"Allanby has given him a right to come and go as he pleases."

"But if you please, you know you can make him stay away."

"You are well aware that at your instigation I have already grievously offended both him and Robert; and Vavasor is continually writing me letters of remonstrance."

"Officious blockheads!—What would they say were I to interfere in *their* affairs?"

"They would have a right to be displeased; but they have also a right to act in mine."

"Not when connected with those of Vavasor Kendal, as you will all find to your cost."

"Why should you include *me* in your menaces?" said the voice, in a tremulous tone. "Surely *I* have not offended you?"

"You listen to every meddling fool who tries to alienate you from me."

"I listen to nothing but my own heart," said the voice still more faintly; "which proves, alas! but a weak admonitor!"

"And if I *do* look in upon you on my road to Lochvardine's," said the savage lover, somewhat appeased, "do you intend to trifle with my affections as you have done in London?—to put forward the claims of a doting old abecedarian, who cares more for little Digby's syntax, or Charles's wonderful progress in his pothooks and hangers, than for the tenderness of their mother?"

"If you intend to speak of my husband in terms like these," said Amelia with spirit, "do not come. I commit a sufficient outrage against him and my children by listening to your protestations, without adding insult to injury."

The tempter was startled by this sudden reassumption of self-respect. "At least," said he, more mildly, "you do not intend to surround yourself by those ferocious women the Carmychaels?"

"I fancy the family will pass some months at Allanby. They are extremely fond of the boys, and take infinite pains with them."

"The boys!—Amelia—Amelia,—you will teach me to abhor those children, if they are to interfere with all my hopes, with all my happiness."

"I will talk to you no more to-night," cried Mrs. Allanby with indignation. "You are as unkind as you are unreasonable."

"Forgive me!" cried her companion, detaining her.

"Forgive me, dearest! How can I be otherwise than wayward and irritable when we are about to part? Promise me that, when I visit Westmoreland you will welcome me more kindly than I deserve,—promise me that you will meet and converse with me as unrestrainedly as now,—and I will be resigned and tranquil."

"Impossible!" cried Amelia, resuming her former manner. "In a small family circle our mutual understanding would be detected in a moment. Mr. Allanby's attention will be then less occupied, and the Carmychaels are as harsh as they are shrewd in their constructions."

"But surely, dearest, surely you can devise means for our meeting, unwatched by their detestable inquisition?"

"No!—" said Mrs. Allanby more firmly. "Indeed, I cannot."

"That dear good silly soul Jane Esthope! Yes, Amelia, yes;—we may, at least find our way to Moorcroft. The Carmychaels are far too high and mighty to molest us with their company at the farm."

"I have a great respect for Jane," said Amelia, gravely,—almost sternly; "and will never consent to deceive her into sanctioning our clandestine meetings."

"You evince your consideration for every human being but myself!" cried Vavasor, angrily, and only too well aware of the extent of his influence over her mind; "but what can one expect from the steadiness of a fine lady's attachment?—What had I ever to hope from the professions of the fashionable Mrs. Allanby? Dearest Amelia!—you are in tears! Forgive—forgive the petulence of the madman who adores you!"

CHAPTER VI.

L'honneur est comme une ile escarpée et sans bords.
On n'y peut plus r'entrer, dès qu'on en est dehors.

BOILEAU.

LORD Seafield's predictions were more than verified, and Lady Emlyn's pupil did honour to her lessons. Vavasor Kendal found it convenient to pass a fortnight

at Allanby on his road to the Lochvardine Moors;—and on the tenth day of his visit, Mr. Allanby found it necessary to turn his wife out of doors:—his Amelia,—the mother of his boys,—the pride if not the comfort of his age.—Poor old man!—heavily, indeed, was he fated to atone the improvidence of his rash marriage!

From the period of Mrs. Allanby's intimacy with the Tuftons and ill-omened friendship with Lady Emlyn, it may be concluded that Moorcroft became somewhat neglected. Jane Esthope was not, however, of the number of those who widen the breach with an alienated friend by cold looks or warm words. She either could not or would not see that, since the lady of the hall had linked herself with the gay and brilliant, she had learned to undervalue the comfort derived from her humbler friendship; that while basking in the splendours of the sunshine, she allowed her foot to trample the forgotten glow-worm whose mild radiance had been so beautiful in her eyes during the season of obscurity. Jane could discern nothing but merit in Mrs. Allanby; she chose to believe that Amelia did but adopt the becoming tone and duties of her station in attaching herself to the magnets of the county and of her own family; and seeing the lady of the hall so much gayer than during the earlier periods of her marriage, strove to believe her happier. Come when she would, Jane was sure to receive her with a smile; but this generous forbearance of attachment, instead of touching her feelings and moving her to a more active spirit of friendship, only tempted her to renew her offences. It was often weeks, sometimes months, after her arrival from town, before she found leisure to saunter through the park, and enter that porch where of yore she had been wont to sit,

"Stringing the jessamines that fell so thick,"

and listening with delight to the exulting inferences drawn by her hostess of the love of the Creator, from the bounty and beauty of his creation.

But these inferences, these lessons, now grew importunate. Mrs. Allanby had learnt to appreciate the splendour of a ball at Carlton House, and no longer needed the brightness of a summer morning;—had been taught to admire the quivering of a pair of diamond earrings, and to despise the dew drops on the thorn;—to

care for no roses but those looping up her court dress,—no music but that of an Italian orchestra. The picturesque charms of Moorcroft sometimes tempted her to regret that it was not situated at Harrow or Battersea, so that she might render it the locale of a fête champêtre; or that Zara might sketch it for a scene in some ballet or divertisement.

Still, however, Jane Esthope remained blind to the growing heartlessness of the votary of fashion; for her nature was not ready in the detection of evil. But all the gratification she might have derived from the packet of flower-seeds or patent churn vouchsafed by the fine lady as a token of recollection on her annual return to Westmoreland at the close of the season, was lost in the regret with which she noticed that the cheek of the youthful beauty was losing its freshness, her figure its rounded symmetry. Although insufficiently conversant with the symptoms of a life of dissipation, she traced the hollow eyes and parched lips of Amelia to the vigils of many a feverish ball-room, and the tremulous hand and peevish tone to the enervated satiety of luxurious indulgence. Often did she entreat Mrs. Allanby to take care of her precious health for the sake of her husband and children, nor did it ever occur to *her* unsophisticated mind that this form of abjuration could lose its power over her auditress. Long after Amelia had begun to neglect her boys and shun the presence of her husband, poor Jane persisted in imploring her to avoid late hours and hot rooms, if only to spare *them* the anxiety arising from her enfeebled health.

But on the return of the family to Westmoreland after that last fatal season, Jane instantly perceived that something was sorely amiss with her friend and patroness,—that the mind and not the body was now disordered. Amelia came much oftener to Moorcroft; almost as often as during the first month of her sojourn at the hall. But she came not to avoid the Carmychaels; she came to escape from herself. She spoke incoherently and inconsistently;—listened with a fixed and absent eye;—and betrayed her abstraction either by an impulsive and inexplicable smile, or still more frequently by the utterance of heavy, hopeless sighs.—Alas! how different is the sigh of guilt from that of sorrow.

She no longer attempted to converse with Jane Es-

thope as she had been wont to do ere fashion fixed its withering grasp upon her heart. Even after she had become an Almacks beauty, and been entranced by that spell of public admiration which creates, at worst, the inebriation of frivolity, Amelia had been accustomed to amuse her wondering hostess with details of the magnificence of the midnight ball, or the courtesies vouchsafed to her by the gracious favour of royalty. But now, there was something lurking in her mind which induced reserve and duplicity. She dreaded the transparency of her own bosom; she trembled lest a searching glance into its secrets should reveal to the shuddering Jane, the one black spirit which she had made its inmate. Amelia had not yet dwelt long enough among the impure, to have grown blind to the hideousness of illicit love!—

But, however ignorant of the real nature of her distemperature, the humble hostess of Moorcroft grieved over its manifestation and its consequences. She, sometimes, fancied Mrs. Allanby's intellects were becoming disordered. *She*, the guardian of the poor, the patient administrant to the sufferings of the flock-bed and ragged pallet,—of the work-house and the hovel,—was only too familiar with the aspect of

"The moping madman and the idiot gay;"

and when she beheld Amelia, after sitting entranced for hours, start suddenly from her reverie, and laugh with that hollow mirthless laugh which follows the prick of conscience,—when she beheld the hand involuntarily clenched,—the blush inexplicably heightened into vermilion,—the breath unconsciously accelerated—the heart panting visibly,—nay, even tears stealing down the cheeks of the young, the lovely, the prosperous, the worshipped Mrs. Allanby,—she could not but fancy that her reason was affected! Jane Esthope was unacquainted with frenzy of the heart; a distemper so much more appalling than mere aberration of mind.

She was afraid of renewing her cautions to Amelia respecting the delicacy of her health, lest her own suspicions should become apparent; and began, for the first time, to regret the immeasurable disdain testified towards herself on all occasions by the Miss Carmychaels, and the hauteur with which even her benefactor

of the hall demeaned himself towards her; for it precluded the possibility of warning them of all she saw to lament and apprehend in the altered eye of her wo-stricken friend. Sometimes, when Amelia had made either little Charles or his brother Digby, the companion of her walk, Jane Esthope was tempted to follow them back through the Park, unobserved, and at a distance, lest the children should come to harm during the bewilderment of their unfortunate mother.

Mean while, the eyes of Miss Priscilla and Miss Lucinda Carmychael were equally observant, and far more discerning. Rumours had long since reached them of Mrs. Allanby's attachment to her cousin; which, instead of divulging to their uncle, they resolved should ripen into farther mischief ere they revealed her delinquency. For once the weird sisters were unanimous. In the hope of dislodging the despised and detested lady of Allanby from the proud pre-eminence of a station where they regarded her as an *intruder*, they agreed to act in concert. Both promised to watch,—to confer,—to betray,—to precipitate her from her honours. Satisfied of her guilt, they only wished to procure evidence sufficient for the enlightenment of her infatuated husband.

It was under these circumstances that Vavasor Kendal made his appearance at Allanby Hall, where he was welcomed by its hospitable master with the urbanity arising from genuine kindliness of heart. How could he be otherwise than affectionate to the cousin of his dear Amelia?—Indignant at his blindness, the two Gorgons redoubled their vigilance; while, by their ungraciousness towards the young *elegant*, whose fastidious foppishness Mr. Allanby treated as a matter of jest, they did but augment the good-humoured indulgence of their uncle.

It was not, however, the reception accorded him by the squire and his maiden nieces which interested the feelings of the selfish Vavasor: he was neither disarmed in his evil purposes by the kindness of the one, nor irritated by the impertinence of the other. But it was, in truth, a source of considerable surprise and vexation to him, to perceive how much he had lost ground with Amelia. The influence of solitary reflection,—of self-examination,—of Jane Esthope's society and unintentional reproofs,—and, above all, the uncontaminated atmosphere of nature,—had wrought wonders. She met

her cousin with a sobered fancy, with a strict determination to re-assume her self-control, to become "Mrs. Allanby" again;—nay! to make even *him* forget "Amelia."—It was not too late. She had sinned in permitting the tree of evil to strike root in her Eden; but it was still a sapling,—still to be rooted up,—still to be cast away to wither among the weeds of the earth. She told him so:—persisted in her resolution,—resented his resentment;—and, for the first time, induced him to apprehend, that his influence was less than paramount in her bosom. He saw that his ordinary tone of irony was ineffectual; that he had nothing to gain on the present occasion, either by taunting or deriding his victim.

But he had only to assume a new method of subjugation; for he was too well aware of his advantage to entertain much uneasiness respecting Amelia's powers of self-estrangement. Vavasor, an actor of no mean capacity, now gave himself over to an insurmountable fit of dejection;—talked like a misanthrope, quoted Werter and Rousseau, resisted (not without much compunction) the excellence of the Allanby venison;—ate little, drank less, and spoke only to give utterance to some melancholy apophthegm. Mr. Allanby took it into his head that his young friend and relative must be suffering from pecuniary difficulties; and having, in a tone of delicacy which would have stricken into the heart of a less experienced libertine, tendered him his assistance, was surprised to find his offers declined, while the pensive mood of the young sportsman deepened to a darker shade. He began to be half-anxious that Amelia's moping cousin should hasten his departure for Lochvardine Moss, lest the waters of his own beloved Greta should be defiled by the crime of suicide.

Even Jane Esthope was amazed by the miraculous alteration apparent in the haughty, gallant, gay, Captain Vavasor; but the pangs of lawless love were the last malady likely to occur to her mind as the origin of his despondency. She had heard of such things, but in a vague and apocryphal shape;—was no reader of Sunday newspapers, and could trace among the legends of the gaffers and gammers of Allanby nothing resembling an infraction of the seventh commandment.—The hard-tasked and laborious poor have no leisure for the crimes generated by a life of luxury. Fancying she could detect symptoms of typhus in the brother of the county

member, she now ransacked Buchan for remedies; so that on Vavasor's next visit to Moorcroft, she was able to suggest a charming combination of rhubarb and senna for the removal of his imaginary humours. She might as well have thrown her physic to the dogs!—The vile, black, loathsome malady lay festering beyond her reach, in the inmost hollowness of his heart.

But though the melancholy Jacques testified great scorn towards the medicine-chest of Moorcroft, there was something in its atmosphere which he found peculiarly congenial. Almost every day he contrived to pass an hour or two in a small sunny garden sloping towards the river, the scene of poor Jane's choicest horticulture. In the cloister-wall which served to close in this tranquil spot, was a deep Gothic recess, formerly the niche of some saintly group; around which Mrs. Allanby herself had trained plants of musk and evergreen roses, whose profuse flowers now hung down in pendant clusters, forming a screen against the sunshine.

It was there he delighted to sit, pursuing his unhallowed meditations (an inmate somewhat different from the crosiered effigies of stone originally adorning the niche,) listening to the hoarse waters of the Greta, whose very name is characteristic of its mournful murmurs; and rejoicing that poor Jane's errands of charity to a sick neighbour at the farther extremity of the village, so often left him in undisturbed possession of a post which the steep woods, entangling the opposite bank from the verge of the stream, rendered as solitary a retreat as ever favoured the sanctity of monastic seclusion. He came and went as he pleased:—Jane did not even apologize for leaving him to the lonely tranquillity which proved so salutary to his sickness. She loved him for loving Moorcroft,—for preferring that precious spot to the wider range of Allanby Park. Nothing appeared to her more natural or more praiseworthy than his partiality.

Alas! that she should ever find reason to alter her views of his conduct!—One day, returning with her knitting-bag on her arm and her Bible in her pocket, from the poor bed-ridden wretch she had gone forth to comfort, Jane observed a crowd of villagers assembled round the wicket of Moorcroft. She trembled! Something she was sure was wrong. Perhaps poor old Alison, the survivor of her decrepit household, had died

suddenly:—perhaps the melancholy Captain Kendal had come to some mischance. Her heart beat as she reached the little group;—she dared not speak—she dared not interrogate them, nor did any of the throng appear inclined to accost her. At length a gossipping farmer's wife found it impossible to repress the tale. A disgraceful discovery had taken place:—the Carmychaels and their witnesses had so well chosen their time, so well preconcerted their plans, that not a doubt of his dishonour could remain to solace the wretchedness of Amelia's husband. Forbidden to re-approach the Hall, the miserable woman stayed weeping at Moorcroft, till her cousin's travelling carriage was despatched to convey the delinquents from the scene of their detection. But she was already gone!—Mrs. Allanby had quitted the country for ever;—her children were motherless;—her husband a disgraced and heart-broken man!—

Jane did not weep at these tidings;—she was horror-struck. The ground seemed opening at her feet! Was it on two such ingrates that Heaven had designed to shower its ill-requited blessings?—She crept into her own polluted dwelling, and knelt down and prayed that one more instance of its mercy might still be vouchsafed to the erring Amelia;—that God would forgive her her trespasses, and grant her time to repent them.

The guilty pair mean while took refuge in London; and the feelings of the chief offender may be inferred from the following epistle, addressed to his brother the Colonel:—

"My dear K——,

"For the love of Heaven, pay over two hundred to my account at Cox and Greenwood's, as soon as possible. You shall have my note for it, or what you will; but I must be off to France before to-morrow morning. I should have applied to my father, but suppose the report of the blow-up has already reached him. Never was there a business so cursedly mis-managed! I have got Amelia on my hands, and what to do with her I know not. There will be a trial and all that sort of thing, and the sooner I get out of the way of those damned brothers of hers, and of my own damned creditors the better. Pray break the business to Angelique.

Yours ever, V. K.

Such was the man for whom Amelia had sacrificed

"Her all on earth, her more than all in heaven;"

—such the being for whom she had abandoned her happy home, her noble sons, and their kind, disinterested, confiding, honourable father.

"No, gentlemen, do not talk to me of a divorce," said Mr. Allanby to the men of the law introduced into his presence by Prissy and Lucinda. "My ignominy is flagrant enough already. She is gone,—I shall hear of her no more! Let me spare her parents,—her brothers;—*they* have not sinned against me. I have but a few years to live; she has shaken the last sands in my glass;—let me not be disturbed by the publicity of proceedings which will serve no good purpose, either to myself or society. Let not the world learn what wickedness may exist in the minds of those it prizes as its best and fairest.—No!—no divorce."

Priscilla and her pet lawyers now pleaded the necessity of superseding Amelia's rights over her children. "As your widow," said they, "she will be able to assert——"

"Well—be it so, then!" interrupted the heart-broken old man. "But be merciful, and consult me no farther on the process of annulling our marriage. Be speedy, too, or I shall not survive to witness this hateful measure."

He did, however, survive to learn that a large amount of damages was awarded him by the strange mode of compensation for his wrongs suggested by the commercial habits of his country, and that he was now included among the "damned creditors" of Captain Vavasor Kendal. He *did* survive to hear that his divorce-bill had passed the Lords,—received the royal assent;—that the dishonour of his ancient name was now recorded in the archives of Great Britain! He lived just three weeks after the event which made his children the chartered offspring of a castaway; bequeathing them to the guardianship of his two immaculate nieces.

When Mr. Allanby's funeral procession, on its way to the parish church, passed the gate leading to Moorcroft, an involuntary groan burst from the multitude of his tenants who were following to render the last tribute of respect to their benefactor! Among others, the Tufton Castle carriages graced the train, adorned with

their due proportion of weepers and hatbands; but it never occurred to Lady Sophia, that she had aided and abetted in the murder of the worthy neighbour whose obsequies she was assisting to solemnize.

CHAPTER VII.

Celui qu'on aime est le vengeur des fautes qu'on a commises sur cette terre. La divinité lui prête son pouvoir. STAEL.

WEARY and revolting is the task of transcribing the records of shame, and willingly do we pass over the two years—the two grievous years—which followed Amelia's dishonour and Mr. Allanby's decease. We forbear to trace the wanderings of her miserable career till we find her installed in a shabby suite of apartments of an obscure hotel in Paris; or to dwell upon the gradual loss of beauty, cheerfulness and temper, which accompanied the forfeiture of her self-esteem. She was no longer capable of amusing herself; yet no one vouchsafed to amuse her; no longer willing to be alone, yet no one deigned to share her solitude. Every better quality of her heart, every higher qualification of her nature, seemed blighted by that single frailty which had precipitated her from the station hallowed to her by the marriage vow. She was now as wretched as she was guilty:—a being branded with the fatal iron;—a mother severed from her children;—a woman rejected by her sex:—she was a divorcée!

It is true she was again a wife,—the wife of the libertine seducer. Vavasor had been too apprehensive of the indignation of her six tall brothers, not to afford her what the world terms "such reparation as lay in his power." She shared his name, his beggary, the miseries provoked by his selfish vices, the broils created by his ungovernable temper; trembled under his frown, languished under his neglect, and withered beneath the callous sneering indifference of his demeanour. Regarding her as the cause of his ruin, he continually re-

minded her that the disgrace she had brought on him was the origin of his own disinheritance, of the rupture of his brother's marriage with the Clapham heiress, of his flight from his native country (where previous to the verdict which adjudged him to the payment of £5000 as a compensation to Mr. Allanby for the loss of his children's mother, he had incurred pressing debts to an amount more than doubling that of his expected patrimony,) as well as of his addiction to the vices of gaming and drunkenness, which he affected to adopt as resources against the wretchedness entailed upon him by his unlucky marriage.

Amelia resented not these accusations; she was now too fearfully habituated to the spectacle of his violence to venture on remonstrance or vindication. She knew that her father had cursed her, that her mother had gone down to the grave without pronouncing her name; that her brothers had been disgraced in their honourable career by her "ungrateful injury" against their benefactor; that her two fair boys were subjected to the tyranny of the Carmychaels, and educated in the sullen loneliness of home, lest at a public school they should be taunted with their mother's shame. She knew all this:—that the spirited Frederick was now a destitute and desperate man; that Vavasor had been compelled to accept a chaplaincy in some pestiferous settlement on the Gold Coast; that her whole family had testified by sudden ruin their former dependence on the generosity of the man she had destroyed. But she said not a word! During her husband's absence she remained plunged in the despondency of irremediable anguish; and during his presence, assumed that flighty, unnatural tone of gaiety which his reproaches demanded in acknowledgment for the sacrifices he had made her. Alas! her merriment sounded like a hollow echo to the anguish of her bosom.

In compliance with Vavasor's exactions, she even laboured to offer an apology for the folly of his preference in the eyes of the world, by the exhibition and adornment of her faded charms. As far as the sordid pittance allowed him by his brother, or occasional gifts doled out by Lady Emlyn to his necessities, or the still more fluctuating contingencies of a gambler's life would admit, she strove to do him honour among his Parisian associates by accompanying him to places of public

amusement, where the wreck of her loveliness, arrayed in the meretricious graces of Parisian art, still ensured universal admiration. Surrounded by his libertine companions (for what but libertines would become the companions of Vavasor Kendal) she tried to laugh, to trifle, to beguile the time, like the rest of the giddy throng; but her heart was breaking, and her mind harassed almost beyond the bounds of reason.

On these occasions, her quick ear was often wounded by the familiarity of speech adopted by men who were formerly accustomed to approach her with the reverence due to a superior being:—her eye sometimes quailed beneath the licentious gaze fixed upon her beauty by those to whom the public annals of the law had revealed her disgrace:—nay! her hand more than once recoiled from a freedom of touch which, as a woman, she still felt her right to resent. Sometimes, rushing to her own chamber she burst into a flood of bitter tears, when allusions were hazarded before the degraded wife of Captain Kendal, which the offenders "would rather have burnt their tongues off" than breathed before the unblemished wife of Mr. Allanby; and often trembling on her sleepless pillow, she dreaded to close her eyes lest the visions of the night should bring before her the figure of him who was now mouldering in the vaults of Allanby,—or the smiling faces, the tender voices of the children whose cradle she had abandoned. "That way madness lay!" Of those boys she dare not think. She humbly blessed Heaven that it had spared her the misery of becoming mother to a child of shame;—even while wringing her hands in speechless despair to think that the little arms which had been wont to fold around her neck, would meet her grasp no more; that the little beings she had cherished in her bosom were already instructed to think of her with loathing. There was nothing past, present, or future, on which she could reflect with comfort. She crouched beneath the hand of the avenger; she shrank from the insulting scorn of the world:—*she was a divorcee!*

More than once she had been brought in accidental but most humiliating contact with her countrywomen; with English ladies of fashion who, by their fussy and strongly marked anxiety to seem unaware of her proximity, only rendered their consciousness of her presence more insultingly apparent. The sister of her husband

visited Paris; and poor Amelia, so long secluded from the society of her own sex, anticipated pleasure even from the notice of Lady Emlyn. But no!—the fashionable beauty knew her own reputation to be too fragile to warrant her notice of the reprobated Mrs. Vavasor Kendal; and after expressing a thousand delicate scruples and a hope that her beloved brother would not resent her refusal by depriving her of *his* company,—she acknowledged that she respected the customs of society too much to visit—*a divorcee.*

For a single moment Amelia *did* hope that her husband would gratify her by some token of remaining attachment, and mark his sense of Lady Emlyn's hardness of heart; but on finding that his sister's establishment in Paris was arranged on the most splendid footing, and looking round on their own denuded apartments, she acknowledged with a sigh that she had no longer any pretensions to such a sacrifice. And it was well that she submitted so patiently to the trial; for she soon discovered that not a scruple on the subject ever entered his head. He was only too happy in an excuse for absenting himself from his miserable home; only too enchanted to find occasion for varying his mornings at the billiard table and nights at the hazard table, with the sumptuous entertainments of Lord Emlyn and the fashionable coteries of her ladyship. In time, these coteries tended to make him still more discontented with his doleful ménage. While Amelia recollected with a shudder the mysteries revealed to her concerning her sister-in-law by the intimacy in which they formerly lived, and the horror with which the first discovery of her vices had inspired her mind,—Lady Emlyn refrained not from pointing out to her brother the folly of braving received opinions, the rashness of his whole conduct relatively to his cousin,—the madness of his elopement, the still greater absurdity of his marriage, the awkwardness of his present position, and the fruitlessness of attempting to benefit by *her* notice and introduction to the higher circles of Paris, a man so lost to society as the husband of—*a divorcee!*

From such reprehensions, Vavasor returned home more morose than ever. He had long regarded Amelia as a mill-stone round his neck. He would have got rid of her on any terms: heartily wished that some blockhead, as inexperienced as himself of yore, would

carry her off. He had long despised, he now began to loathe her:—he scorned the partner of his crime, and hated the partner of his poverty. It was no longer an object to him to make a secret of his profligacy. In defiance of her entreaties, in spite of her tears, he persisted in a career of vice which did but aggravate their misfortunes. He soon avoided their joyless home by spending whole days in frivolous dissipation, and whole nights at the gaming-table. *Who* was there to take part with the neglected wife?—*Who* was there to advocate the cause of the poor abject *divorcee?*

And yet for worlds would not Amelia have breathed one word of complaint or accusation against the savage who so bitterly revenged upon herself her own injuries against others! It was not that she still cherished that fervour of attachment which renders the most flinty path as smooth as greensward, and tempers the most stormy wind to a fond and faithful wife. Could she have deceived herself into the maintenance of her former delusion that he loved her—poverty, penury,—nay! even the disdains of the world and the scorn of his hypocritical sister—would have been borne with cheerfulness. But she could not so deceive herself. *Truth* was "the iron which entered her soul." She saw herself abandoned by him in whom she had put her trust; by him who, amid all her shame, was bound to honour her; and instead of repining at the injury, humbly laid her submission to this last, worst, trial, as a sacrifice on the altar of God. She knew that

"Man but wrought his will to lay her low."

Nor was it a matter of consolation to her that others (sometimes an acquaintance of her happier days, sometimes an honourable friend of her brothers,—*always* Englishmen,) tendered her the same outward tributes of respect she had formerly commanded. While they addressed her with deference, evinced their consideration for her opinion, or treated her with the courtesy due to the virtuous and the good, she felt her heart sink within her. She half feared they might be ignorant of the fatal truth,—that they might not *know* the miserable tenure of her position; and in the bitterness of her soul could hardly refrain from exclaiming, "Do not honour me thus,—do not be thus gentle, thus considerate. I am a disgraced womam;—I am *a divorcee!*"

Where—where could she turn for consolation from the stony heart from which she was rejected?—Though knowing herself abhorred, she had no alternative but to remain and eat the bread his grudging eye rendered so bitter. *She* could not arise and go to her father;—*her* father had reviled and disowned her.—*She* could not approach the unpolluted dwelling of her sisters, or expose her brothers to the shame of her presence.—There was no hiding place for her on earth but the roof of the partner of her guilt. Whatever might be his conduct, she was bound to bear it,—whatever might be her sufferings, she had forfeited her right to complain. She was *a divorcee!*

Fortunately,—and it was the only favour fortune was capable of bestowing on so miserable an outcast,—the prolonged anguish of her mind accelerated the decay of her mortal frame. Amid all her privations and all her sorrow, she found her health failing; and the first symptom of serious indisposition which became manifest afforded her the last hope of the miserable:—*she felt that she might die!* It was almost a bliss too great for a sinner like herself to anticipate release from her house of bondage. She knew that it was her duty to resist the merciful hand which promised to lead her to the land of peace and promise; she knew that the gift of life is a sacred deposite in our hands,—that she was bound to wrestle with disease, and cling to the two-edged sword that was cutting into her heart of hearts. Time, and at no distant period, must set her free; and she trusted it was not sinful presumption which encouraged her to pray that her intervening pilgrimage might be calm;—that her departure might be unruffled by storms;—that no *very* cruel act on the part of Vavasor might disturb her last moments.

CHAPTER VIII.

Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario? ROWE.

THE infirmity of Amelia's health served at least to release her from those forced efforts of gaiety which had recoiled so heavily on her feelings. Her day for vivacity was gone.—In an atmosphere whose buoyance is exhausted, the feather falls as heavily as the plummet.

But instead of commiserating the languor and feebleness extending from the physical to the moral existence of the invalid, Vavasor only made her dulness an excuse for flying to the relief of society more congenial with his own tendency to vice and folly. Lady Emlyn, who in London was the leader of a coterie devoted to the excitements of high-play,—a coterie that felt privileged to inveigh with horror against "gambling," because its members ventured their thousands on games where cunning tempers the fortuities of chance,—on the manœuvres of écarté and whist instead of the dare-all risks of hazard and rouge-et-noir,—had now removed her card-table from Grosvenor Square to a splendid hotel in the Rue Rivoli; where she had the honour of assembling, twice a week, a larger proportion of the idle and licentious of the exclusive caste, than could be found in any other suite of drawing-rooms in civilized Europe. Her *salon* was in fact crowded with busy ranks of those swindlers of distinction who, in opposition to their brethren of lower pretensions, (the chevaliers d'industrie,) ought surely to be termed the chevaliers de la paresse. Among these, the brilliant air and lively effrontery of Captain Kendal secured him a warm acceptance; and by frequenting the circle of Lady Emlyn, he had not only the gratification of escaping from the insipid mediocrity of the home his vices had created, but acquired the power of indulging in others which were now still dearer to his heart.

Vavasor Kendal was an expert player. Like other fri-

and his success had been the means, on more than one occasion, of extending his means of disgraceful enjoyment. At least, however, his career lay on the verge of a precipice; for playing at a stake beyond the limit of his fortune, a single faltering step might at any hour precipitate him into an abyss of shame and ruin. Amelia was often tempted to doubt whether she had more cause to dread that intoxication of triumph which induced him to still farther excesses, or the reverses tending to aggravate the violence of temper to which she was an habitual victim. The fluctuating fortunes of the gamester,—his losses or gains,—were equally a source of suffering to herself. But the Carnival was drawing to a close; she soon began ardently to wish that his sister might grow weary of the increasing dulness of the French capital, and migrate among other swallows of the season, in search of new pleasures.

Long had she been in expectation of an announcement to this effect, when one night,—a cold cheerless night in March,—Vavasor exceeded even his ordinary period of absence. The habitually dissolute of Paris rarely keep late hours. Vice does not form with them, as with the English *roue*, an occasional excess, but is consistent and regular in its habits. Captain Kendal usually returned home between two and three; and Amelia was accustomed to sit up, and by her own services lighten the labours of their scanty establishment. It was *she*, the invalid, who was careful to keep up light and fire for the tyrant of the domestic hearth.

But on this occasion two o'clock came,—three, four, five o'clock,—and no Vavasor. Hour after hour she listened to the chime of the gaudy time-piece decorating their shabby apartment; and while the night advanced, in all its chilly, lonely, comfortless protraction, shivered as she added new logs to the dying embers, and as she hoped or despaired of his return, alternately replaced the veilleuse by candles, the candles by a veilleuse. She had already assumed her night-apparel; and after wandering like an unquiet spirit from her own apartment to the sitting room and back again, a thousand, thousand times,—after reclining her exhausted frame and throbbing head against the door of the anteroom, in the trust of catching the sound of his well-known step upon the

stairs; she threw herself down on the sofa for a moment's respite. But in a few minutes she started up again. —Surely that was his voice, which reached her from some passenger in the street below,—some passenger humming an air from the new Opera, according to Vavasor's custom, when returning flushed with the excitement of success? Again and hurriedly did she prepare for his reception,—again place his chair by the fire, his slippers beside it; and stand with a beating heart and suspended breath, to await the entrance of the truant. But, no! it was not him. The wanderer had hastened onwards to some happier home. The street was quiet again. She would take a book and strive to beguile the tediousness of suspense.

Dreary indeed is that hour of the twenty-four which may be said to afford the true division between night and day; when even the latest watcher has retired to rest, while the earliest artisans scarcely yet rouse themselves for the renewal of their struggle with existence;—when even the studious, the sorrowing, and the dissipated, close their overwearied eyes;—and when those who "do lack, and suffer hunger," enjoy that Heaven-vouchsafed stupor affording the only interim to their consciousness of want and wo. The winds whistle more shrilly in the stillness of that lonely hour. Man and beast are in their lair, and unearthly things alone seem stirring;—the good genius glides with a holy and hallowing influence through the tranquil dwelling of virtue; the demon grins and gibbers in the deserted but reeking chambers of the vicious. Even sorrow has phantoms of its own: and when Amelia found herself a lonely watcher in the stillness of night, the kind voice of old Allanby,—the voice that was wont of yore to bid her speak her bosom's wish, that it might be granted,—often seemed creeping into the inmost cell of her ear. She could fancy him close beside her,—taunting her,—touching her,—till, starting from her seat, she strove to shake off the hideous delusion. Sometimes the soft cordial tones of her mother,—her mother, who was in the grave,—seemed again dispensing those lessons of virtue of which her own life had afforded so pure an example; sometimes the playful caresses of her boys seemed to grow warm upon her lips—around her neck. Yes! she could hear them, see them;—little Charles who, in in his very babyhood, had been accustomed to uplift

his tiny arm in championship of his own dear mother;—Digby, the soft, tender, loving infant, whose very look was a smile, whose every action an endearment!—And now they appeared to pass before her as strangers; changed —matured—enlightened;—without one word of fondness —one gesture of recognition!

From such meditations, how horrible to start up amid the dreariness of night, nor find a human heart unto which to appeal for comfort,—a human voice from which to claim reply in annihilation of the spell that transfixed her mind. The cold cheerless room, the flickering light, the desolation that was around her, struck more heavily than ever on her heart. "Oh! that this were an omen!" she cried, with clasping hands, as she listened to the howling of the wind upon the lofty staircase leading to their remote apartments. Drawing closer over her bosom the wrapper by which she attempted to exclude the piercing night-air, Amelia smiled at the thought of the chilliness of the grave,—of the grave, where the heart beats not, and the fixed glassy eye is incapable of tears.

"I shall lie among the multitudes of a strange country," faltered she; "there will be no one to point out with officious finger to my sons, the dishonoured resting-place of their mother,—their *divorced* mother! Vavasor will be freed from his bondage—free to choose anew, and commence a more auspicious career. But for me he might have been a different being. It is *I* who have hardened his heart and seared his mind. And oh! may Heaven in its mercy touch them,—that he may deal gently with me during the last short remnant of our union!"

A harsh sound interrupted her contemplations;—the grating of his key in the outer door,—of his step in the anteroom. Mechanically she rose, and advanced to meet the truant who had kept her watching,—who had so *often* kept her watching,—so often been forgiven. A momentary glimpse of his countenance convinced her that he was in no mood even to wish for indulgence. His brow was black—his eyes red and glaring. After a terrified pause, she tendered him her assistance to unclasp his cloak; but with a deadly execration he rejected the offer.

"Are the servants up?" said he, sullenly.

"Not yet."

"So much the better! I must be off before they are on the move."

"Off? Vavasor!—for the love of Heaven——"

"Be still! Do not harass me with your nonsense. I was a fool to come here at all; only it may be necessary for you to know explicitly to what you may trust for the future."

Amelia sank stupefied into a chair.

"In one word, I am a ruined man. To-night's losses have made me as hopeless as I ought to have been long ago. I have lost—but no matter!—I know I played like a fool. What is to be expected from a miserable dog like me, who has thrown away his prospects, and is harassed with all sorts of cares and annoyances?—No matter!—To-morrow the thing will be blown; and before my creditors get wind of the business, I shall be half way to Brussels."

"To Brussels?" faltered Amelia.

"Of course it is out of the question hampering myself with companions of any kind at such a moment. Besides, my sister has only afforded me the means of getting out of the scrape, on condition that *you* return to England to your family. I have no longer the power of maintaining you; but if you are inclined to co-operate in the only plan that can save us both from starving, Sophia will secure you an allowance of fifty or sixty pounds a-year."

Amelia was silent.

"If not, you must take your chance; for I can do nothing farther for you. For Heaven's sake don't treat me with a scene; for I have only a few minutes to pack up my property! The fiacre is waiting; there is not a moment to lose. Well, Amelia! what do you say?—I want an answer. Do you, or do you not choose to go to England?"—

Amelia made an affirmative movement;—she could not utter a syllable. And Vavasor instantly passed into his own room to make his preparations for immediate flight. —She never knew in what manner he took his last leave of her. When the servants proceeded to their occupations on the following morning, they found her insensible on the ground; but when restored to consciousness, the continued absence of her husband and a note of five hundred franks which he had deposited in her work-box for the purpose of enabling her to quit Paris, served to prove that the dreadful impression on her mind was not a mere delusion of the night. Alas! she was soon compelled to admit that she had looked upon him for the last time.

CHAPTER IX.

The only art her guilt to cover,
And hide her shame from every eye—
To bring repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom—*is to die!*

GOLDSMITH.

IT was a considerable relief to the attendant hired by the unfortunate Amelia to accompany her to England, when, at length, the invalid reached London in safety, and dismissed him from his disagreeable responsibility. The man naturally imagined that among assembled thousands of her fellow-countrymen "*cette jeune dame si aimable,—si souffrante,—ne pouvait manquer d'amis et de protection.*" Little did he imagine, when he quitted her in the miserable lodgings in which she took refuge, how brilliant a part she had once played in that gorgeous pageant of London life!

Yet among those thousands, not one—not a single person was to be found,—unto whom Amelia would have presumed to make known her situation. A divorcée,—a woman under the ban of society,—she was well aware that such an appeal would be rejected with scorn by those who formerly shared her career, and far exceeded her delinquencies; and with whom her poverty alone would form a sufficient motive for consigning her to oblivion. The fashionable world traffics on the principle of a mutual exchange of amusement, and will not be defrauded of a fair return for its expenditure. Like the chariot of Tullia, it drives onward in its noisy triumph over the bodies of the fallen,—however dear, however venerable! Perhaps, after all, the triflers are in the right;—it would be adding insult to injury did they tender their glass beads and tinsel toys as a token of sympathy, in lieu of the tears we ask, and which they know not how to shed!—

Poor Amelia, as she cowered over her scanty fire,—

tremulous with the exhaustion of her disorder, and overwhelmed by the loneliness of her own soul,—experienced not the slightest inclination to force her miseries on the notice of her former associates,—the butterflies of May Fair. From her birth she had known but three real friends. Two of them she had survived;—and of her own part in that survivorship she dared not think. Her mother,—Mr. Allanby,—they whom she fancied would have commiserated *her* sufferings even in her very guilt, were in the grave she had dug beneath their feet;—but the third—her own good generous Jane was still living, still good, still generous. She knew she had accelerated the death of Mrs. Kendal and her husband; of Jane Esthope she had only caused the ruin!

Misled by the false representations of his prudish nieces, Mr. Allanby had been induced to believe his grateful protegée a participator in the frailties of his wife. It was proved to him that Amelia and Vavasor had been frequently seen to meet at Moorcroft; oftener during the absence, but sometimes in the very presence of its mistress; and he had little reason to believe that such perfect simplicity could exist in any female bosom, as that which prevented Jane Esthope from thinking evil of an attachment subsisting between cousin and cousin. He judged it impossible but that she had both seen and understood and sanctioned their proceedings; and remembering with indignation the kindly impulse which induced him to provide her with a home, being homeless,—and with protection, being fatherless,—he did not hesitate to request she would seek her future residence elsewhere than on his estates, and leave Moorcroft to be levelled with the dust, or suffered to fall to decay.

His commands were executed, without appeal or murmuring, by his lowly and patient tenant. She was too deeply afflicted by all that had occurred, to anticipate any renewal of happy days in her old home. She felt that it had been polluted;—that her neighbours of the village (even those who had loved her longest and taxed her kindness most) were beginning to look upon her with an eye of mistrust. She was more than once melted into tears by a struggle at her gate between the two little motherless boys and their attendants—Charlie and Digby insisting that they might possibly find mamma at Moorcroft, where they had so often found her before;—and the new servants

selected by the Misses Carmychael, harshly forewarning them that Moorcroft was a bad place, and that they must never again set foot within its gates. Jane's obedience to Mr. Allanby's decree was as prompt as it was unresentful; and long before Amelia's divorce was legalized, Jane —poor Jane—had torn herself from her native village, where every hovel, every stile, every pollard stump, was dear and familiar to her; and gone to settle at Graundton, a hamlet within a few miles of the verge of Allanby estates. She had conceived it possible to live in exile from her father's parish,—but not from his county. She did not dream of the possibility of quitting Westmoreland.

Her new residence was a very small and inconvenient cottage. She had no longer any heart to attempt the renewal of her little farm; but resolved to limit her occupations to ministering to the sick, and working for the poor. The holy concord of her feelings was over; and deeply did she grieve that she could no longer look around her with the same trusting eye, the same benevolent impressions. *She* had forgiven the persons whose conduct had been the means of effecting this grievous change,—she trusted Heaven would forgive them also; and "poor Amelia" was remembered in her daily prayers, with the same fervour that had tendered to the interposition of Providence the destinies of the beloved Mrs. Allanby.

The recollection of this spontaneous act of womanly and Christian charity was very precious to the worthy Jane, when she received the letter of the dying penitent, apprizing her of her destitution, her wretchedness, her trust in the mercies of one to whom she had proved so mischievous a friend. For the first time she began to wish she had pitched her tent farther from Allanby Hall; lest it might injure the unhappy sufferer to remove to the home she instantly determined to offer her. She did more than *offer*, for that even might the Gentiles have done: but *she*, the inexperienced and untravelled Jane, actually set forward towards the mighty wilderness of London;—actually surmounted the difficulties presenting themselves between the Bull and Mouth and Wardour Street; and finally, between soothing, and nursing, and prescribing,—chiding, encouraging, and assisting,—managed to re-convey the fragile object of her solicitude to the purer atmosphere of Graundston. She now began to rejoice that she had ever found courage to withhold a portion of her scanty

hoard from the wants of the poor, in preparation for her own extraordinary exigencies of sickness and old age. Who indeed could she have found either poorer or more feeble, than the perishing Amelia?—But the Almighty willed not that she should be of the number of those who perish eternally. All that contrition might avail to sooth a slow and tormenting progress to the grave, was vouchsafed her. With a wasting brow,—an extinguished voice,—a broken heart,—she listened anew to Jane Esthope's lessons of wisdom. Faith and hope are exercises of a Christian spirit consonant even with the tears of penitence,—the moans of physical suffering!

No seeker after penances ever practised greater self-denial, than that which induced her to refrain from seeking the forgiveness of her brothers and sisters, lest she should blot a happy page of their existence by reminding them they had a guilty, and teaching them they had a dying relative. No devotee crawling on his abject knees round the shrine of Loretto, or ascending in sackcloth the steps of the *santissima scala*, ever executed an act of expiation arising more purely from piety and self-abasement, than that which prompted her to visit the abandoned tenement of Moorcroft:—to pause in the porch now closed over with its jessamine humbling herself in the dust, while the trembling Jane wiped from her livid forehead the heavy dews of approaching dissolution; and to enter the village church of Allanby, and commune with her purified and repentant soul on the gravestone of her husband. She looked up to the wall of the church, trembling as the ghastly glimmer of a marble effigy showed her the monument of the man she had betrayed:—and it was almost a consolation to her to know that retribution had already overtaken her crime. Her breath came shorter and shorter, when she remembered how soon the weeds would be springing over her own unhonoured remains!

But a still greater sacrifice than all these, a far—far more bitter trial, was the effort of fortitude which enabled her to pass the day in pious resignation, when the two young heirs of Allanby Hall came over during their holydays to attend a cricket-match on Graundston Green. She knew her boys were within a few hundred yards,—almost within sight of her dwelling;—and even fancied that if she listened, a mother's ear might detect their voices—

(the voice of her own dear bright-eyed Digby)—among the acclamations of their sport.

"Close the casement, dearest Jane!" she faltered. "The temptation is strong, my spirit weak, my heart sinking. I have never looked upon them *since*. God be with them—God be with them! Let me not grieve their young eyes with the spectacle of a dying mother: let me not sully their hearts with the sight of the *divorcee*. Come nearer, Jane. Read to me,—place your hand on my knee; I must not feel *alone* to-day.—Read to me, dearest!—Yes! *there*—'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD!'"

All day she wrestled with her grief; nay, even subdued it. But her disease was not to be combated even by the courage of the Christian. She retired to rest as usual; and after smoothing her pillow, Jane Esthope quitted her at her own request, that she might try to sleep and gain some respite from her anguish.—And she succeeded in the attempt. When at midnight her compassionate friend stepped softly to the bed-side, and drew aside the curtains to inquire whether she needed any thing more, the summer moonlight shone full on her cold white face. Her wants were over,—her sufferings past; and Jane, falling reverently upon her knees, and raising up her hands to God, prayed fervently for the eternal happiness of the *divorcee*.

END OF VOL. I.

THE

MISERIES OF MARRIAGE;

OR,

THE FAIR OF MAY FAIR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Mothers and Daughters," "Pin Money," &c. &c.

CONTAINING

THE SEPARATE MAINTENANCE,
THE DIVORCÉE,
THE FLIRT OF TEN SEASONS, &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MY GRAND-DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

The gods, to curse Pamela with her prayers,
Gave the gilt coach and dappled Flanders' mares,
The shining robes,—rich jewels,—beds of state,—
And, to complete her bliss, a fool for mate.
She glares in balls, front-boxes, and the ring,
A glittering, vain, unquiet, wretched thing.

POPE.

GERALDINE, Lady Ormleen, was a Peeress in her own right, or rather in right of her mother, who died in giving her birth. Her father, however, was only a Sir Gilbert Maitland, who had allied himself with the defunct Baroness, smitten with admiration of her scutcheon of pretence, her precedence, and the few thousands a-year that proved barely sufficient to burnish her lofty emblazonments; and as we are enabled to judge of her understanding and temper only by this election of a weak, vain, cold, formal, well-looking man to share her coronet-matrimonial, there seems no reason to imagine that the education of little Lady Ormleen would have been more efficiently superintended, had her ladyship been spared to preside over the school-room of the young peeress.

Having thus described Sir Gilbert as an infatuated inamorato of aristocratic distinctions, it may be inferred that his own pedigree afforded a tax on the invention, rather than the learning or researches of the Herald's Office. He was, in fact, a new man; nay! luckily for himself, so *very* obscure in his origin, that his accession to Sir Gilbertship some years previous to his marriage, was an incident quite secure from the sneers of the world. No one had ever heard of him before. No newspaper so much as hinted the purchase of his new honours; no fashionable coterie scoffed at the bad taste of aspiring to such pinckbeck distinction as that of a modern baronetcy. His name was unknown either to Fame or Scandal; while the colossal fortune acquired by his father, (for, however obscure, he *had* a father,) in the sly peculation of some minor depart-

ment of the Honourable East India Company's Madras Establishment, was too *cannily* distributed and carefully husbanded, to attract prematurely the attention of society. Old Maitland, in whose soul all the parsimony of his native city of Glasgow seemed concentrated, had invested his money in estates in divers counties, and securities of every description. Instead of buying the mansion and park of some ruined Earl, and building a picture or statue gallery; instead of rendering themselves destitute by the acquisition of Etruscan vases, tables of Sèvres, and tripods of malachite to the enrichment of half a dozen upholsterers and auctioneers,—neither father nor son evinced the slightest tendency towards attracting the notice of the world by pelting it with guineas,—according to the prevailing fashion of *nouveaux riches*.

Old Maitland hoarded his money for its own sake; and Sir Gilbert for the sake of its ministry to his selfish predilections. The thing he liked best in art or nature was a lord. Born in ignominy, bred in obscurity, he aspired to raise himself out of the mud, not by personal eminence, but like some lieutenant of infantry, "by purchase;" and having successfully truckled to and haggled with the minister for his baronetcy, he shortly afterwards carried himself and his Birmingham honours to the feet of the Lady Ormleen. Twenty thousand a-year, and a very handsome person, were duly appreciated by her ladyship and her ladyship's guardians, even though unappended to chivalrous descent; and Sir Gilbert, at length, experienced the unspeakable gratification of beholding the panels of his carriages, his service of plate, and other goods and chattels, sprinkled with coronets in every direction. He chose that all his belongings should be ennobled; and from the livery buttons on the stable-dress of his fourth helper to the fish-slice, every thing either at Maitland Hill, or Court Ormleen was carefully embellished with the insignia of his dignity. His attachment to his patrician bride was commensurate with her power of endowing him with the distinctions he so ardently coveted: he adored her in proportion to her length of pedigree; and seemed to love in her person all her lordly cousins, all her dukely progenitors. How could he do otherwise than study the caprices of a woman who was descended from a Saxon Thane; or how refuse a new diamond necklace to a Baroness in her own right, whose maternal ancestors

had ridden into England in the train of William the Conqueror?—

Divers of the Lady Bettys, her illustrious cousins, predicted, indeed, that the obsequious spouse would not be able to survive the loss of so beloved a wife. But they were mistaken. "*Le roi est mort; vive le roi!*" cried Chateaubriand and the French, on the decease of Louis le Désiré. "Lady Ormleen, my consort, is dead,—long live Lady Ormleen, my daughter!" cried Sir Gilbert Maitland. He almost forgot the tears indispensable to the claims of society on becoming a widower, in the glory of finding himself parent to a Peeress; hastened to issue orders respecting the "consistency of her ladyship's pap;" and exacted that every packet of magnesia should be forwarded by the village apothecary, "to the Right Honourable the Lady Ormleen," (*tres haute et tres puissante princesse, agee d'un jour!*)

For many succeeding years, Sir Gilbert existed for the duty of attending levees and intruding at drawing-rooms; giving dinners to the aristocratic kinsmen of his wife and daughter and getting them duly advertised in the newspapers; writing his name in the porter's books at the gate of royalty; and above all of qualifying the new Lady Ormleen to wear her ermine gracefully, and extend the magnificent connexions of the family. He had the good fortune to secure as governess the daughter of a decayed brother baronet,—a spinster as deeply devoted as himself to genealogical predilections; and when Geraldine Lady Ormleen attained the happy age which enabled him to request her aunt, the Countess of Malpas, to present her at Court, the young *debutante* exhibited a tone of frigid, fastidious, tranquil elegance that did ample honour to her perception, but very little to the impulses of her own young heart.

She had, in fact, been educated in a total abnegation of the illusions of life. The feelings or frailties innate in her bosom, Miss Stanley and Sir Gilbert never investigated; they taught her only the most dignified mode of repressing the epidemic of vulgar emotions, of deporting herself with dignity throughout the matter-of-fact realities of life. Her primer was the "Manual of Etiquettes;"—her estimate of her fellow-creatures was regulated by the table of precedency and forms of estate. The pompous Sir Gilbert, who had now established himself somewhat on the footing of a nobleman on sufferance, minutely instructed her in the

minor privileges of patrician descent; till in her seventeenth year, Lady Ormleen looked on the follies and crimes of the plebeian world with the contemptuous indulgence that prompts the mercy of the lion towards the vermin invading his den for plunder. Aware that much was not to be expected of such miserable creatures, she was of opinion that the law ought to be lenient to the larcenies and burglaries forming an appanage of *caste* to the John Smiths, or Dick Browns of the realm:—and was as deeply impressed with the degradation of "the populace, as the Toryest of Tory ministers. Having been informed by her *parvenu* father, that the society of London consists of some three thousand individuals exclusively concentrating the wit, learning, accomplishments, and merit of the kingdom, she had no more idea of extending her interest beyond this aristocratic ecliptic of the social firmament, than of looking for roses and lilies in a plantation of Savoy cabbages.

Had the fair Geraldine's mother survived, or had she been trained in the intercourse with persons of her own condition common to her rank, all these accomplishments would have been as natural to her as the scholarship of Dogberry;—associating only with persons of elegant manners and refined habits, she would have become elegant and refined by the ordinary course of imitation. But with Sir Gilbert Maitland, gentility was a labour, nobleness a science; and there was a species of fussy propriety about all his words and actions, greatly resembling those efforts of an unpractised swimmer to keep himself from drowning, which induce one to fancy that he cannot be enjoying a recreation. His life was made up of exertions to maintain those dignities which were about as much his own as the tinsel crown and kingly mantle of the histrionic Richard, who struts his hour upon the stage in borrowed lustre.

Mean while, the appearance of the Baroness in society was hailed with universal acclamations. She was remarkably handsome, remarkably graceful, remarkably well-bred; and it was natural that the world, under the influence of these extrinsic excellencies, should bestow its partial interpretation on all the rest. The coteries of the beau monde could not admire her dignified elegance without believing it demonstrative of intrinsic excellence. They concluded her mind to be as well regulated as her body; and while they admired the distinction of her air and placid composure of her brow, gave her credit for every nobler characteristic of gentle blood. Who, indeed

could have thought—who could have dreamed—that the heart of the youthful peeress was encased in the iron armour of egotism; that the weed of pride had grown up and wound around her soul, till its qualities were stifled by the noxious enlacement;—that Lady Ormleen was morally as well as physically short-sighted, and looked upon men and things through the medium of a golden eye-glass;—that she saw nothing, and could see nothing, in a natural way.

It will be conjectured that a peeress positive and heiress presumptive (heiress to Sir Gilbert's twenty thousand per annum, as well as possessor of the dilapidated glories of Court Ormleen and its bogs) could not fail to attract "braw wooers plenty." Like a princess in a fairy tale, or Portia in the drama, she was courted in person, and by proxy,—by princes of Morocco and royal Danes; dukes from the Faubourg St. Germain, "lords of their presence and no land beside," unrolled their parchments for her admiration, and talked to her of Charlemagne as among their more recent and familiar progenitors:—a descendant of Fin-Ma-Coul, standing six feet six in his boots, boasted his inches,—a Highland Earl offered her a county, and all the thistles and kail cultivated therein, for her jointure,—a Sicilian Baron, his castles à la Radcliffe,—till poor Sir Gilbert, dearly as he loved such studies, was sorely puzzled in cross-examining the testimony of Collin's Peerage, the Almanack of Saxe Gotha, and the Annali Istorichi of the Abbate Sansovino. His mind was in a perpetual confusion of crowns and coronets, and feoffs chieftainries; gules, or, argent, bends, wavy, and fess. An untravelled man, and, like most of his countrymen, perplexed in the extreme to determine the comparative value of British and foreign nobility, he was for a moment tempted by the lofty announcement of *sua Eccelenza* the Prince of Castello Aspradelvalle, ex-chamberlain to the late King of the Two Sicilies, and Grand Master to the Palermitan order of the *Cignoe Croce* (without entertaining the slightest suspicion that the said illustrious High Mightiness was a Sicilian squire, deriving his subsistence from the retail sale of his sour *Terra-mota* wine, who had given lessons of fencing at Vienna, and of the Italian language at Paris;) and was again tempted by the magniloquent superscription of his Right-luminous Highness the Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Bergenzitmershausen (uncon-

scious that his Transparency had officiated as a candle snuffer to a billiard-table in Dresden.) It was well for his "right honourable daughter" that the Baronet, though blind and blundering, was not inclined to be precipitate in the choice of a son-in-law.

CHAPTER II.

A quelques uns l'arrogance tient lieu de grandeur.
LA BRUYERE.

AND did the heart of the youthful Lady Ormleen whisper nothing all this time, and claim no share in the debate? Well-tutored as she was, and worthy to shine in the *pas grave* of a *minuet de la cour* at a birth-night ball, had she no partialities among the powdered beaux who strutted before her in their bags and swords?—no preference between the Prince Ludovico of Castello Aspradelvalle, and Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Bergenzitmershausen?—Beneath the high-bred coldness of her smile, the dignified tranquillity of her brow, was no flutter of spirit concealed? Was she alone exempted from that mighty touch of nature which makes the whole world kin?—

Certainly not! The Chinese are not born with their little feet, nor the terrier with its peaked ears, nor the fine lady with her elegant insensibility:—

"Nature works in every breast;
Instinct is never quite suppress'd;"

and it was only by the influence of art, by the miraculous power of education, that Miss Stanley had enabled Lady Ormleen to speak in a monotonous whisper, to enter a room with a step as equal as if it had been regulated by the pendulum of one of Maelzel's metrenomes, and to receive the adulation of Lord Adolphus Fermoy, Sir Marmaduke Brosier, Sir Harry, and my Lord Duke, with a brow as undemonstrative as that of one of Roubilliac's busts. Lady Ormleen had felt her heart beat somewhat quicker than beseemed this marble tranquillity of deportment;—she *had* found the hurried words perplexed in her utterance;—she *had* experienced that dull, blank vacancy which oppresses the mind,

"Then, when some well-graced lover quits the room."

It was one night at a ball at the Duchess of Gordon's in Piccadilly, that a young man of highly prepossessing appearance was presented to her by a certain good-humoured old Lady Shetland, who qualified her formal nomination of "Captain Dalrymple" with a scarcely audible whisper of—"I dare say, my dear Lady Ormleen, you have heard all about him;—Lord Inverarie's *eldest* son, you know." Her young ladyship bowed, without pleading guilty to her ignorance on the subject. Feeling that Lord Inverarie's eldest son was a very proper partner for her; and finding in Captain Dalrymple the most amiable, the most cultivated, the "wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best," of all those who had hitherto guided her steps through the mazes of the cotillon, she permitted herself to smile with great warmth, and talk and listen with greater freedom, than she had ever done before. There was something very fascinating in the dignity of his fine countenance, occasionally, but rarely illuminated by a burst of enthusiasm in the utterance of a noble sentiment—the description of a beautiful object. And then he was a bit of a hero. He had shared a leaf of the laurels of the great Rodney, in his triumph over De Grasse; and was just returned from Paris, where he had assisted in the theatricals of the Petit Trianon, and learned to talk with rapture of the blue eyes of Madame de Lamballe, with feeling of the graceful accomplishments of Marie Antoinette. In short, he was quite a man to be fallen in love with;—and Lady Ormleen, though she bestowed as formal a bow upon him at parting as she had ever done on his Highness of Saxe-Bergenzitmershausen, retired to rest to dream of his chesnut curls (the first revolutionary crop she had seen emancipated from powder and pomatum,) and to laud the gods that so attractive a person happened to be the eldest son of a lord.

On addressing herself to Debrett, on the following morning, for farther information relative to her accomplished partner, she discovered that Inveraire was a Scotch barony;—that the present representative of its honours, being born in the year 1718, must, at that critical anno domini, be seventy years of age:—and that he had married Mary, the daughter of Lord Annaly, deceased, by whom he had two sons—George and William;—George being the heir apparent, and of course the Hero of the

Ville de Paris, as well as of the *chassezs* and *ragadons* of the preceding night. Sir Gilbert would probably have extended his investigations from the date of the creation to the very motto of the Scottish baron; but the fair Geraldine was sufficiently smitten to reserve her farther consideration for their living inheritor.

On the following night, at Ranelagh, Prince Ludovico di Castello-Aspradelvalle, (we love, as Goldsmith says, to give the whole name,) was superseded in his attendance by Captain Dalrymple. Sir Gilbert, who was now prevented from accompanying his daughter into public by an increasing asthma, and who was represented on such occasions by Lady Ormleen's aunt, the Countess of Malpas, was quite satisfied to learn, at her return, that she had been attended by Lord Adolphus Fermoy, and (in a lower tone) "the son of Lord Inverarie." It all sounded very right and proper; and he merely wheezed forth the expression of his hopes that Geraldine "had made known to Lord Adolphus his extreme regret that the infirm state of his health prevented him from taking a more active part in the cultivation of his Grace, his father's acquaintance."

There was one, however, among Lady Ormleen's attendants of the evening whom she did not name to her father, less from want of candour, than from want of interest respecting him. This was a certain tall, lumbering, unmeaning Earl of Fairford, who probably considered himself ranked among the adorers of the young Baroness, inasmuch as he followed her from fête to fête,—from Ranelagh to the Pantheon,—from Cumberland House to Lady Granby's; but who had never yet uttered a tender syllable in her presence, and, indeed, very few syllables of any description. He chose the shortest words, uttered them with the unchanging physiognomy and mechanical impulsion of an automaton; and seemed disposed to stalk through the world as if he had neither business nor pleasure in its proceedings. Of Lord Fairford, Lady Ormleen said as little as of her new friend, Captain Dalrymple; seeing that the former never entered her head, and that the latter had both entered and taken forcible possession of her heart.

The season (for even in the eighteenth century the session of Parliament was the season of the fashionable world) passed glibly on; and Lady Ormleen for the first time experienced all the perturbations, and hesitations,

and vexations, which young ladies of eighteen, whether peeresses or not, are apt to be afflicted withal when assailed on the right hand and the left, in the ring-haunting chariot and the opera-box, the coterie and the crush, by a superfluity of suitors. So scrupulous an observer of etiquettes as the pupil of Miss Stanley and the daughter of Sir Gilbert Maitland, would not, of course, indulge her own inclinations so far as to frown upon a Duke, an Earl, and a Lord Adolphus, for the sake of the Captain Dalrymple whose voice was so sweet in her ears, and whose conversation so embellished by wit, wisdom, and understanding,—until the momentous hour which was to blight the matrimonial pretensions of the former by a decided "No," and to privilege the future Lord Inverarie by a definitive "Yes."—Yet, strange to tell, Captain Dalrymple advanced not a single step towards the attainment of this interesting crisis. He exhibited all the morbid symptoms of the most decided lover,—now mirthful—now melancholy—now jealous as Othella—now moody as Jaques;—sometimes putting forth the utmost attractions of his mind and manners, exerting himself to entertain, to interest, to engage the courtly lady of Court Ormleen;—sometimes shunning her presence for days and days, evenings and evenings;—nay! even pointedly and ostensibly devoting his homage to other and less distinguished belles.

Lady Ormleen, or rather Sir Gilbert as her plenipotentiary, was compelled to dismiss Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Bergenzitmershausen to his barn in Westphalia, and Ludovico Prince Castello-Aspradelvalle to his Neapolitan garret; Lord Adolphus Fermoy having addressed her in a foolscap sheet of rigmarole not remarkable for the purity of its orthography, was refused in six lines of note paper; while Sir Marmaduke Brosier, who exhibited his pretensions to the hand of the Peeress-heiress (or Heiress-peeress as *he* estimated her attractions,) nuncupatively and per favour of his family solicitor, was nonsuited on the spot. Only two among her vassals of the season still remained at bay,—Lord Fairford and Captain Dalrymple; and the silence of the former still remained as unimpressive, as that of the latter was expletive of unutterable things. Lady Ormleen was at liberty to believe, (or if not, she certainly took the liberty) that it was out of the abundance of her favoured lover's heart that his mouth did *not* speak. His adoration was evidently too great for words. She saw the bosom of the rough and

manly sailor swell and his eyes grow dim with tears, when others presumed to address her in the language of admiration; but it appeared he could not yet find courage to give voice to his own.

Now this was precisely the sort of lover to win the approval as well as the fancy of the lofty, dignified, Geraldine. She saw that he regarded her with deference; that he was not a vulgar, ranting lover like Lord Adolphus, nor a self-sufficient coxcomb like the handsome Westphalian magnet with the unpronounceable name. She admired his respectful mistrust of his own attractions; and only smiled the more kindly upon him when he trembled in her presence, and changed colour at the sound of her voice. Mean while, all that could be said to encourage a timid man was said;—all that could be done to determine an undecided one, was done. Sir Gilbert invited him to dinner; Lady Ormleen lingered on his arm in the ball-room, long after the dance for which it had been offered was at an end; till, at length, one night,—one luckless night, (when Miss Stanley having suggested to her quondam pupil during the operations of the toilet, that the world was beginning to make remarks on her intimacy with Captain Dalrymple, and to speculate concerning the possible and probable motives of its protraction without a definitive engagement) Geraldine stalked forth in her white satin, determined to bring the business to a conclusion before the end of a fête whereat they were already engaged to dance together. Yet, somehow or other, her courage failed her when it came to the point; and the evening seemed likely to terminate without any material advantage attained on either side; when, having quitted the ball-room with him to go in search of her chaperon Lady Malpas, Lady Ormleen suddenly exclaimed as they were traversing its brilliant suite of rooms together—"It will be long, indeed, before I again enter this gay mansion. We have been waiting for the birthday, and on Friday we leave town for Maitland Hill. My father is now so much better, that he has promised to take me over to Court Ormleen in the course of the autumn; and I trust I shall be able to persuade him to pass next season in Dublin. I feel as if I ought to have been there long ago."

An ordinary partner would have, of course, responded, "Have you never been in Ireland?"—"Do you imagine you should prefer Dublin to London?" or some other of

those luminous common-places which pass upon a chalked floor between young ladies in white satin, and young gentlemen in pumps. But it was not at all surprising to Lady Ormleen that, on hearing the announcement so artfully put forth, poor Dalrymple's arm should tremble, and his step relax in the precipitancy of its search after Lady Malpas.

"To Ireland!" he ejaculated, "and so soon? And perhaps never to return, or to return as the bride of another!"

It was now Lady Ormleen's turn to tremble; and she almost repented her temerity in provoking the crisis. It would be difficult to say which heart beat the quickest; which breath came shortest of the two lovers during the next five minutes.

"I have scarcely courage," at length faltered the heir-apparent; "I know not how to venture on the chance of losing for ever those precious distinctions of your notice so generously conceded to me for three months past; yet too well am I aware that all must sooner or later be explained;—and why—why not now? Why should I hesitate to inquire whether you, dearest Lady Ormleen, share in the prejudice of common minds;—whether you are to be swayed in your choice by a quartering more or less in your coat of arms; whether—oh! how shall I ever express myself intelligibly;" suddenly exclaimed poor Dalrymple, his lips quivering, his complexion growing paler and paler, while the tears literally started from his eyes.

Lady Ormleen was no less surprised than grieved by this excess of trepidation on the part of her lover:—she had passed the ordeal of a considerable variety of proposals, and had never met with any thing of the kind before.

"Whenever I have attempted to approach this subject," resumed the trembling lover, "the dread of hearing a sentence of rejection—of reprobation—from your lips, has imposed silence upon mine. Geraldine!—dearest Geraldine!—tell me,—answer me,—and if it must be unfavourably, let it be gently and kindly done—alas! I feel that I have not fortitude for harsh dealing at your hands. The misfortune—the humiliation of my birth affords me misery enough."

"Misfortune,—humiliation?" cried Lady Ormleen, startled into utter disregard of the passionate pleading of

her lover. "What *do* you—what *can* you mean?—Humiliation!—surely I understood you from Lady Shetland to be the son of Lord Inverarie?—Perhaps you imagine that, like my father, I am a scrupulous genealogist?—Believe me, the date of a creation is quite lost upon *me.*"

"The son of Lord Inverarie," replied Captain Dalrymple, gravely,—almost sternly—"the *eldest* son;—and yet degraded from the rights which ought to have waited on my birth! Geraldine, I have been an outcast from my cradle. Know, that in giving me birth, my mother was not yet released from the bonds of a previous marriage. Lady Inverarie is perhaps known to you only as the Daughter of Lord Annaly; but till some months after I saw the light, her divorce from her first husband—from the Earl of Fairford—was still unlegalized."

Lady Ormleen shuddered. She saw at a glance the overthrow of all her hopes; for it is not to be imagined that, trained in the school of Sir Gilbert Maitland, her decision balanced for a moment. A nameless stigmatized man to become her husband,—the husband of the young Peeress of Court Ormleen?—Impossible, utterly impossible! It was some consolation to her that, during the dialogue of this overwhelming communication, they had been gradually approaching the saloon where sat her respectable aunt Lady Malpas, dozing in her tissue turban, whilst she nodded in time to the echoes of the distant orchestra. A pretext was thus afforded for hurrying her reply—her decisive, definitive, cutting reply.—Ah! poor Dalrymple!—as he rushed from the room during the subsequent process of waking up the sleepy aunt, how bitterly between his grinding teeth did he revile the hollow courtesy dictating the thanks for the honour of his preference which qualified Lady Ormleen's rejection!

In another week he was cruising among the Western Islands in his father's yacht; but it was not till he reached the Clyde a month afterwards, on his return from his solitary expedition, that the newspapers first acquainted him with the marriage of "Geraldine Baroness Ormleen, of court Ormleen in the county of Monaghan, with the Right Honourable the Earl of Fairford, of half a dozen Parks, Halls, and places in divers counties and divers kingdoms of Great Britain!"

CHAPTER III.

Oh! who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense, the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?
That seeks what cravens shun with equal zeal,
And where the feebler faint, can only feel,—
Feel, to the rising bosom's inmost core,—
Its hope awaken, and its spirit soar!

BYRON.

TEN years vanish more readily, in the bold foreshortening and aerial perspective of the novelist, than among the storms and perils and privations of a sailor's fortunes.

Having fled in despair and indignation from the scene of his injuries, Captain Dalrymple, on feeling

"The waves bound beneath, him as a steed
That knows its rider,"

experienced a degree of consolation such as we derive from the familiar welcome of an old and cordial friend. His professional predilections came strongly on his heart. He had been scorned and aggrieved on land;—the pathless, the free, the uncontaminated ocean was before him. An application to the Admiralty, backed by the interest of his father, secured him one of the finest frigates in the service, and the Indian station; and could a more remote command have farthered his ardent desire to absent himself from England, he would have sought it with eagerness. Already he exulted in the prospect of reaching those islands of the Indian main,—those palmy shores and wild savannahs, where lordships and ladyships, hoops and plumes, are baubles still undeveloped by the progress of civilization;—where the dignity of the order is somewhat invalidated by the tattooed aspect of the peerage;—where sovereigns, like the swinish multitude of England, wear rings through their noses,—while their grooms of the bed-chamber are feathered without the previous ce-

remony of tarring. He had no longer patience with the "herald's boast,—the pomp of power," or the frivolities of the Fair of May Fair.

Whether the ten succeeding years of Captain Dalrymple's professional labours and triumphant career, in both hemispheres and divers ships of the line, elapsed with advantage to his wounded feelings, is immaterial; they proved, at least so advantageous to his country that, on returning thither from the victory off Ushant, an admiral's salute awaited him from the batteries of Portsmouth, and a welcome almost paternal from the arms of his King. The first vacant red riband was rendered as a tribute fairly earned by the exertions of Sir Claudius Dalrymple: and his younger brother George (now Lord Inverarie,) actually wept for joy in his arms, on witnessing the compensations with which fortune was beginning to repair the injuries of his birth. The tide of popularity ran warmly in his favour. His physiognomy had become public property; illuminating the windows of all the printshops, and the sign-posts of many an ale-house, between Wapping and Gravesend:—from the wherries playing at Hungerford-stairs to the last newly-launched Indiaman, the "Sir Claudius Dalrymple," was the favoured craft. Then when naval enthusiasm was at its height, our hero,—Lady Ormleen's hero,—every body's hero,—would certainly have been elected by acclamation for the city of Westminster, and probably without ballot for any club in the liberties of St. James's Street.

If the new Countess of Fairford, mean while, had achieved no national victory, nor succeeded in planting the British flag on barbaric shores

"Where Europe's anchor ne'er had bit the strand,"

her conquests were not altogether unimportant. Her weak, doting father did not long survive the triumph of beholding in his favourite volume a record of the union of his daughter (*his* daughter!) with an Earl of nineteen descents,—whose barony dated from Poictiers, and whose origin from the Ark. Poor Sir Gilbert Maitland was one of the earliest victims to the horrors of the French Revolution; sickening at the assembling of the States General, and expiring at the abolition of nobility. It was only wonderful that the establishment of a republican govern-

ment did not rouse him again out of his coffin! But after life's fitful fever of frivolous ambition, he slept well; and it was now Lady Fairford's turn to carry on his career of frivolous ambition; to exist for the crowd and *in* the crowd; breathing no atmosphere but that of the reeking halls of ostentation; acknowledging no standard of comparison in her loves and likings, but the barometer of ton; living as the beasts that perish without hope or fear, save for the realization of her daily schemes of self-aggrandizement.

The wife of Lord Fairford had, however, somewhat diverged from the object of pursuit so dear to Sir Gilbert's daughter. If Lady Ormleen courted the distinctions of rank, the young Countess was engrossed by the worship of—Fashion. As yet exclusives were not: but if

"They had not got the *word* they had the *thing*."

Absolute monarchy being somewhat in the shade at that epoch of revolutions, Almack's was in a state of abeyance; but there were factions of rival duchesses, fierce as the contentions of Guelph and Ghibeline;—the fêtes of modern Barings found their antecedent in the hospitality of a Thelusson or a Dottin;—and the Prince, whose motto of "*Ich dien*" addressed its allegiance solely to the empire of the Goddess of Pleasure, delighted to create a land of faëry of his own—a midsummer night's dream of masquerades and ridottos, where Helenas and Hermias disputed the honour of his smiles,—where Nick Bottom in a star, and Peter Quince in a garter, were compelled to a labour of love.

It was Lady Fairford's glory to hold herself aloof from this laughter-loving court, erecting for herself a throne of higher eminence to which even kings,—even the Prince who was "every inch a king,"—might come and bow. There is a certain degree of dignity in the success of any attempt, even to the construction of a mouse-trap. Lady Fairford *succeeded!*—She grew to be a sort of fourth estate in the constitution of the *beau monde*. Like Harry his prototype, the Prince of Wales fled from his noisy associates to take refuge in the high-bred grace of her ladyship's circle. She was at once the favourite of Frogmore and of Carlton House; maintaining, in an age of profligacy, a purity of reputation, which (like the sunlit snows of Alpine summits) was irradiated by the favour of the bright

orb over her head; while her beauty and accomplishments bespoke for her a ray no less distinguishing from the ascendant planet of the hour.

There was nothing to be heard of in London but Lady Fairford. Her weekly parties formed a sort of secondary court; her cold, calm elegance of deportment was a glass of fashion and a mould of form to the debutantes of the day. She had, in fact, a school of rising Countesses similar to Metternich's class of diplomatists,—an increasing school, which soon extended its pernicious maxims and mischievous example beyond the line of ceremonies and etiquettes. Many a woman strove to imitate Lady Fairford's dignified manner of managing her train (for trains were then a daily and most troublesome appendage,) till she acquired Lady Fairford's mechanical smile, Lady Fairford's vacant stare through her favourite eye-glass, Lady Fairford's love of public admiration, Lady Fairford's neglect of all save worldly pleasures. Yet, after all, what could be urged against her? Her duties, so called, she did not flagrantly outrage; she never flirted beyond the boundaries of decency, and her *cavaliere servente* for the season, was never admitted beyond the public courtesies, of his calling; she was a good mother,—for having procured the advantages of an excellent governess and masters for her only daughter, she interfered not with their discipline: and a good wife, for though she knew that the days of Lord Fairford were devoted to the turf, and his nights to that dignified species of patrician gambling, inordinate whist, she neither remonstrated nor retaliated. Had he been infected by our recent epidemic in favour of the ring and rouge et noir, perhaps she might have been less indulgent. But Lady Fairford felt that *his* were no vulgar vices, and did not allow them to influence the calm contempt with which she had long regarded her lord—her lord, who was not her master.

The Earl of Fairford was, it must be owned, a very dull,—but not, as the sequence generally runs, *good* sort of man. He was, in fact, a very *bad* sort of man; but transacted his vices and follies so methodically and withal so very silently, that no one had any thing to answer to his appeal to their reprobation. "A bold-faced villain," but neither "fine" nor "gay;" his licentiousness was as sullen as the remorse of others; he loved wine like a sot, and play like a black-leg. Like Savage, he exulted in

tracing the failings of his character to the infamy of his parents. It is true,

"no mother's care
Sheltered his infant innocence with prayer;"

his father, abandoned by the guilty wife who had bequeathed him only this ill-omened pledge of her marriage vow, vented upon the unhappy changeling all the bitterness of his own wounded feelings. Repulsed at home, unfitted to conciliate favour abroad, the young Ishmael grew up in morose hostility with his kind. He married Lady Ormleen chiefly to mark his animosity towards Claudius Dalrymple, the offspring of his mother's illicit love; and afterwards shunned and detested her, as an active disciple of the abominable heresy which had mainly contributed to render himself an orphan. "Lady Fairford is a woman of fashion," he would say, in reply to those who wondered to see him consume his nights at his club, and his days with his stud. "I have no taste for tinsel and buckram; and there is room enough in the world for both of us, without jostling."

There was, indeed, room enough in the world for both of them; there was room enough even in their mansion on the Terrace in Piccadilly. No two persons who despised each other so sincerely ever lived on a more respectable footing of mutual contempt. They sat at the same table whenever it was necessary their board should be devoted to the rites of hospitality, appeared at the drawing together, and generally took their departure from town to Fairford Castle or Maitland Hill on the same day. Lady Fairford was far too well-bred to indulge in domestic squabbles. She had never been guilty of quarrelling with any one in her life; and it would have been strange enough to commence with her own husband, whom "she had never loved enough to hate," and who interfered so little with her own pursuits and proceedings. Once, indeed,—for one five minutes of her married life,—she heartily detested Lord Fairford, and with difficulty refrained from telling him so. It was when, after perusing Sir Horatio Nelson's despatch, proclaiming the triumph of his half-brother—whole-enemy—Sir Claudius Dalrymple, he suddenly burst forth into a rhapsody of maniacal execration. It was not, however, a glow of enthusiasm

in favour of her former lover which so kindled the enmity of Geraldine;—it was that a husband of hers should swear so like a stable-boy.

The quick impulse of her wrath was not unmarked by the man whom it secretly qualified as a brute. Attributing her undisguised aversion from himself to a lingering preference of the hated individual who had been the innocent bane of all his happiness, Lord Fairford could scarcely repress the malignant fury with which he soon beheld Sir Claudius Dalrymple adored by his country, and welcomed by his king. What availed it to *him* that Court Ormleen and its peeress were his own, if, indeed, she secretly regretted her precipitate refusal of one who had made such rapid strides from ignominy to honour? What availed it to *him*, that he had inflicted a wound of unspeakable anguish upon his mother's detested son, since the mother of his child cherished an insulting attachment for her deserted lover? He promised himself to watch them narrowly. Dalrymple was now an idol among those frivolous circles of which Lady Fairford was the distinguished ornament; and his lordship was prepared to detect the first symptom of intelligence or familiarity between them. For full two months he dragged his ungainly person from party to party, and exhibited his lurid visage like the copper-coloured sun of a London October, in many a ball-room, standing insulated and sullen amid the gaudy crowd.

But his alarms were quite superfluous. The morphine of high fashion had exercised its torporific influence on the heart of the fine lady. Her pulse did not vary half so much when she found herself seated beside the lover of her youth, as it would have done on a remote suspicion that Lady Granby's feathers were half an inch higher than her own. She was pleased, indeed, to find him "somebody;" because she often felt mortified in remembering that the sole preference of her heart had been lavished on a "nobody." Admiral Sir Claudius Dalrymple, however, though a temporary lion in society and the darling of the sign-posts, was, by no means, invested with a sufficiently odoroussanctity of *ton* to interest her dangerously in his favour. Although a hero and a K.B., she observed with disgust that the manners of the gallant Admiral were hardened and his complexion umbered by ten years of quarter-deck.

But it was not alone his manners that were of firmer texture,—his heart was hardened, too;—and *she* was the cause of all. Betrayed by the early fervour of his feelings to a disappointment of such grievous extent, he had made it his business to fortify his bosom against farther exigences;—not against men and women,—*there* his sympathies were pure, and deep, and overflowing as ever,—but against lords and ladies. Instead of rating them at their real value, and dispassionately regarding their enthusiasm in his favour, he chose to believe them all (with the exception of his own beloved George and William) heartless as Lady Fairford, and soulless as her lord. The earnest glance with which, after so long an absence, he regarded the woman who had trifled with his affections, (a glance not to be misinterpreted even by the jealous fancy of her husband,) arose solely from curiosity. He wanted to discover whether the imp of pride had been cherished into a full-grown demon,—whether self-possession had become insolence; but whatever the result of his observations, whether on working the problem he decided that the hard lines engraven by dissipation on her countenance were somewhat deepened by care and vexation, did not transpire. The air of compassion that suddenly overspread his countenance, might, perhaps, proceed from a notion that the queen of fashion was less happy than she sought to appear. If so, the Knight of the Bath was mistaken:—Lady Fairford had no heart to be unhappy with.

CHAPTER IV.

From loveless youth to unrespected age.—POPE.

It did not surprise the fashionable peeress to learn from the public prints, in the course of the following year, that Rear Admiral Sir Claudius Dalrymple had united himself, in some little shabby village in Clydesdale, to a Miss Janet Sinclair. It mattered little whom he married now. He was forty in age, fifty in appearance, and had acquired the undistinguished look peculiar to the dowdy hum-drum circle of the Inverarie family.

But it *was* a matter of considerable amazement to her to observe, at one of the drawing-rooms of the season, that the woman presented by Lady Inverarie, and most graciously received by her Majesty as bride to the hero of Martinique and Ushant, boasted one of the "highest order of fine forms;"—that she was graceful and elegant beyond the competition of any among the handmaidens of Fashion, and that her manners and voice were ingratiating to a degree, and in a way which the influence of that farthingaled and furbaloed goddess too often extinguishes. It was evident that the new Lady Dalrymple might have been admired as much as she pleased; but it was no less evident that it pleased her only to be admired by her husband. People chose, however, to bestow their gratuitous and unsolicited interest on the beautiful and unassuming stranger; and when Sir Claudius was shortly afterwards appointed second in command, to share

"Of Nelson and the North
The glorious day's renown,"—

the anxieties of the young and lovely Lady Dalrymple were honoured with such universal sympathy as Lady Fairford found was not to be quizzed into nothingness through her supercilious eye-glass.

Nor were those fatal ten years of juniority which ensured to her rival a brow so much more fair, a cheek so much more softly rounded than her own, the sole advantage possessed by the wife of Sir Claudius over his former love. Janet was one of the gentlest of human beings. A creature of the shade,—the peaceful tenour of her obscure life had never been ruffled by the jealousies and envyings and strifes which calcine the constitutions of the Fair of May Fair. We know that the Valais has its goitres,—the Belgic frontier its "death's head of Ypres,"—St. Gilles its endemic maniacs,—and other insalubrious spots their characteristic disorders and ugliness. The most eminent of our light novelists has depicted with great success "the hard parboiled look of fashion" characteristic of an Almack's belle. But neither he nor any other chronicler of fashionable small beer (that flattest of beverages, which the reading public so greedily yet so grumblingly drains to the dregs,) has ever analyzed the hieroglyphics of the occult science of worldliness; which have

their only permanent inscription among the wrinkles of a well-worn dowager, and may be traced in their first faint shadowing on the hollow brow of many a fading beauty. Pope thought fit to imprison his rebellious gnomes in a bodkin's eye, and immerse them in cups of bitter washes; but had the graceful world of his creation admitted a really malignant sprite, the caustic poet should have chained it (like Prometheus to his rock) to the rouged, scornful, attenuated, dissipation-seethed cheek of an habitual woman of fashion.

Lady Fairford was scarcely seven and thirty when her daughter Lady Gertrude Wildenham was brought forth from the school-room into the daylight of the *beau monde*, yet no one dreamed of longer defining her as a pretty woman. Elegant and distinguished indeed she still was; more so perhaps than ever. The great world pronounced her manners perfect. Like the *pirouette* or *entrechat* of an opera dancer, her well practised graces had acquired a degree of mechanical precision, leaving all chance of failure out of the question. Her mode of presiding over the festivities of her country-house, was an accomplishment quoted as combining the ease and sprightliness of old Paris with the *retenu* and refinement of modern London; and the illustrious host of Carlton House had been heard to declare, that "he was delighted to visit Lord and Lady Fairford in the country or at their house in Piccadilly, but that he could not presume to invite them in return."

But even triumphs such as these, did not redeem her from a certain angularization that ill became her lofty person. No cosmetic would fill out the wasted symmetry of her skinny arms; her Grecian nose acquired a shrewish sharpness; her lips, so often compressed by the irritations of an unamiable disposition, lost their rich hue and outline of Cupid's bow. Her eyes, dimmed by the blaze of illuminated fêtes, grew red and inexpressive; a yellow hue surrounded her mouth; a livid tint lurked beneath her hollow eyes; the pearls between her parted lips were tesselated with an admixture of "anti-corrosive mineral;" while

> ——— "not Rowland nor Kalydor—no!
> Nor all the searching sirups of the East
> Could ever med'cine her to that sweet"

complexion, which was gone with its roses for ever and ever. It was the standard of comparison unconsciously raised by the fair and gentle Lady Dalrymple, which first planted the perturbed Geraldine before her looking-glass, to shudder at the defeatures of time revealed in that self-investigation; and determined her to repair the injury and invest herself in new charms, not by the cultivation of a better spirit or more intellectual fascinations, but by a sedulous trial of all the lotions, abstergent or emollient, which ever ensured a villa and a barouche to an advertising perfumer. The locks once flowing, which Time had now so ruthlessly thinned, were to be cultured with bear's grease;—her teeth, though few and far between, were to be stripped by an influx of patent dentifrices of their last armour of enamel;—Mesdames Lebrun and Dupin were to be admitted to morning rehearsals of their frippery arts;—while Constable was despatched to the British Museum, to hunt out prototypes of antique settings for the Ormleen jewels among the effigies of Anne Boleyn or Henrietta Maria. Lady Fairford was determined that, if no longer the loveliest, she would at least be the best-dressed peeress at the Court of Queen Charlotte.

Fortunately for Lady Gertrude, her mother had too much worldly wisdom—which, after all, is better than absolute folly—to entertain the slightest jealousy of *her* attractions. Lady Fairford was well aware that although the tribe of Browns and Smiths have the enviable privilege of sinking a year or two of their age, *she*, whose birth and parentage were heraldic property, was too unsparingly dated in the public eye to profit by any such manœuvre. A reference to the peerage would suffice to prove her seven and thirty; and it therefore became her policy not to appear younger than, but young *of* her age. Lady Gertrude's budding beauty, if properly turned to account, would naturally ensure a general exclamation that Lady Fairford was a wonderful woman to be the mother of a grown-up daughter. Nor, indeed, was she personally indifferent to the triumphs of the young beauty. If not tenderly and femininely attached to her child, she was proud of her; if not inspired by a mother's desire that Gertrude should acquire solid principles and exhibit estimable qualities, she was eager that the little heiress of so many distinctions should be the best dancer, the best musician, the best-bred *debutante* of the season; and regard-

ed her daughter, much as she regarded her diamonds or her picture-gallery, as an adjunct of her state. It would have been a dreadful catastrophe had the only child of the beautiful Lady Fairford been a fright or a fool; and as, fortunately, the Lady Gertrude Wildenham proved worthy of a portrait by Lawrence, and a bust by Nollekens, while William Spencer rendered her the heroine of a few stanzas full of butterflies' wings and hyacinthine locks, she soon began to interest herself warmly in the sensation produced by the juvenile goddess.

It never entered her head to feel anxious respecting the establishment in life of so fair a creature—so eminent a favourite of fortune. Lady Gertrude Wildenham—the future Lady Ormleen—the future possessor of thirty thousand per annum—the future patroness—the future proprietress of Maitland Hill with its paraphernalia of plate and state, French cooks and Italian confectioners, hunters, and hounds, and all other superfluities which make glad the heart of man,—had only to look around her and select from among the Dukes and Marquesses of the land, a partner worthy to share her canopy and coronet.

> "May Fair was all before her where to choose
> Her place of rest;"

and Lady Fairford never puzzled herself to inquire whether Providence would vouchsafe to be her guide.

Lady Gertrude had been so excellently trained in the way she should go, that her mother seldom found it necessary to trouble her with admonitions. Her manners were so extremely graceful and pleasing, that—although something wanting in dignity—the Countess judged it better to leave them as they were. All that was wanting would be supplied by knowledge of the world; and though at present she was fonder of study, and in some points more serious than suited the habits of Piccadilly and the Castle, those failings would probably vanish to make way for the increase of self-assumption anticipated by her lady-mother from the influence of fashionable homage. It was, therefore, only necessary to qualify her views by a few occasional hints, —such as "The ugly man with red hair I presented to you last night for the supper-dances was Lord Kidderminster, the Duke of Berwick's son. They have the

finest place in the north of England; and I have seen the Duchess's hoop completely powdered with diamonds. The Richmond necklace is perhaps finer; but the general effect of the Berwick jewels is the noblest thing of the kind in England;" Or, "Do not dance so often with Lord Robert Wynge; for I am assured the Marchioness of Clanhenry is in a very declining state, and the Marquis is a man very likely to marry again. Lord Robert is well aware of this; and I am rather surprised he should continue to put himself so forward."

Lord Fairford, mean while, said nothing; he kept silence even from bad words, which formed a considerable portion of his dialogue when the spirit of Curaçoa *did* move him to speak. He cared very little for his daughter—having daughters elsewhere more congenial with his tone of mind; and the utmost stretch of his paternal affection was demonstrated in the act of riding down one day to Rotten Row, to admire Lady Gertrude's mode of managing a bay mare which had been broke for her use. His head-groom informed him that "my lady passed for one of the best 'oss-women in Lon'on;" and for half a second he forgot that she was daughter to the proud, cold, scornful Geraldine of Court Ormleen, and felt proud that she should bear his name. In spite of his boorish insensibility, Lady Gertrude often strove to propitiate him by such little offices of kindness as he would accept; and once when she inquired with tenderness after a fall he had received in hunting, he was startled into observing, while he patted her on the head with almost as much kindness as his favourite setter,—"Gertrude! I believe after all, as times go, you are a good girl. Don't let them make a fool of you,—don't let them make *worse* of you. You will gain nothing by despising either your father or your husband. Marry an honest man, child!—and prove a better wife, and a better Christian than your mother!"—

"An ox once spoke, as learned men deliver;"

but certainly not more to the purpose than the taciturn Earl of Fairford. His daughter pondered gravely over his words;—thought of them again and again when her lady mother proposed A. B. C. or D. to her acceptance;—and still more when an "honest man," who was no

Lord proposed himself. Eagerly did she press upon the attention of Lady Fairford the high endowments of Mr. Cunynghame, his strong understanding and amiable character. Alas! he might have boasted the genius of Bacon and the virtues of Sir Thomas More, and her ladyship's reply would have been still the same. Mr. Cunynghame was a man of no standing in society,—the younger son of a Scotch banker,—a person incapable of making a figure in the fashionable world. He had been pressed on Lord Fairford's acceptance for one of his northern boroughs by Mr. Pitt, as an obscure young man of wonderful abilities; and honoured by the notice of the Earl, on the discovery that his family had a law plea of twenty years' duration with Lord Inverarie. A frequent visiter at Fairford Castle, Lady Gertrude had bestowed considerable interest on the young member whose speeches now attracted universal attention; and whose sober rational demeanour was so different from that of the bucks and bloods, the barouche driving lords and steeples chasing baronets of that obstreperous day. Interest ripened into love—such love as soon begets a correspondent attachment. Trembling at his own presumption, Herbert Cunynghame at length tendered his heart and hand (for he had little more at his own disposal) to the acceptance of the future peeress:—trembling at hers, Gertrude ventured to assure her mother that she preferred the younger son of a Glasgow banker to all the Dukes and Marquesses of the peerage of the United kingdom.

Lady Fairford was too much amazed for words. At first she was inclined to treat the business as a jest; but Lady Gertrude's composed demeanour soon convinced her she was in earnest. She next represented to her that neither the Earl nor herself would ever accede to such a marriage, nor grant her the means of subsistence with her plebeian lover;—that a union under such circumstances must ensure the ruin of Mr. Cunynghame;—and that it was her duty, at least, to wait the attainment of her majority. Lady Gertrude, in the hope of softening her mother's prejudices during the interim, readily acceded to this proposal of delay, which was suggested by Lady Fairford only that it might be employed in practical lessons of the miseries of unequal marriages, and the joys of prosperity.

But all would not do. On the day succeeding her

twenty-first birth-day, Lady Gertrude, in presence of her father, bestowed herself and her expectations upon Herbert Cunynghame, Esq., M. P.; Lord Fairford having agreed to allow him three thousand a-year during his life-time, and the indignant Geraldine protesting that she would not only allow them nothing at all during hers, but would live for another half century only to keep Lady Gertrude Cunynghame out of the enjoyment of her hereditary title and estates. It was, however, some comfort that the family dissensions gracing this disproportionate alliance, afforded her an excuse for a positive and permanent separation from her lord. Her last act, in quitting Fairford Castle for ever, was to forbid the young couple her presence; reminding her daughter that although Lord F's. perverse liberality might afford them present means of support, his precarious health and incapability to alienate an acre of land from the heir male, might very shortly leave them destitute,—when they would have to rue their short-sighted precipitancy.

This taunt, this threat, she thought would call forth a frightful thorn among the bridal roses she so longed to wither. But it only served to teach the young couple prudence; and to hint the necessity of laying aside for the threatened winter, a portion of their summer store. Mr. Cunynghame ensured the life of his father-in-law for thirty thousand pounds; and became the happiest husband of the happiest wife in England with the residue of Lord Fairford's annuity.

Lady Fairford's threat of alienating herself for ever from their society, was in Mr. Cunynghame's opinion a highly gratifying circumstance; his only demur in seeking the hand of the lovely Lady Gertrude having arisen from his horror of the influence of such a mother-in-law. Above all things, he dreaded for his wife the counsels of a heartless woman of fashion.

CHAPTER V.

See how the world its veteran rewards!—Pope.

Such was the youth and maturity of the Dowager Lady Fairford, whom we have all beheld, in her age, flitting among the coteries of May Fair a haughty, high-bred, phantom of former fashion;—such the fruits of an education in the school of worldly wisdom, and of a marriage dictated by sordid ambition!

However unstable in higher points of morality, the Countess very rigidly kept her word with regard to her daughter; nor, indeed, had she much inducement to swerve from her purpose. Her associates belonged chiefly to those flighty circles, where no person affects an interest in any thing not immediately connected with their own gratification, and where no one cared either for the rupture or its consequences; while the truer friends of Lady Gertrude, seeing her so happy in her modest household and cheerful home, would not even instigate a reconciliation likely to plunge her anew into the midst of those perilous ordeals, from whence she had escaped uninjured. Mr. Cunynghame continued to distinguish himself in Parliament, acquiring at once the admiration and respect of the country; and when, after the expiration of six years, and the birth of Lady Gertrude's five children, Lord Fairford did really fulfil the earnest desires of his noble consort, and betake himself to the vaults of Fairford, it was a gazette very favourably received by his Majesty's lieges, which compelled the Right Hon. Herbert Cunynghame to accept the Chiltern Hundreds, on his appointment to the vacant government of the island of Ceylon. Thirty thousand pounds formed a sorry provision for one destined eventually to succeed to an annual income of similar amount; and the husband of Lady Gertrude (too reasonable a being to affect an oversight of the ordinary casualties of human life) felt that his incapability to do justice to his younger children, in the e ent of Lady Fairford's

outliving her daughter, forbade him to decline so advantageous an honour.

Previous to her embarkation, his wife addressed an humble, though not a hypocritically penitent epistle to the Peeress of Court Ormleen, imploring a parting interview. Nor could it have been the terms of the request which gave umbrage to the unnatural mother; for the letter was instantly returned unopened!

Those, however, who were in the habit of intimate association with Lady Fairford, clearly discerned that she would not have been sorry to find the petition renewed:—

"So absolute she seemed, and in herself complete"—

so long had she been accustomed to unlimited monarchy, that she considered it Lady Gertrude Cunynghame's duty to approach her with the deference exacted by an Eastern Prince or Italian shrine; and felt satisfied that a due regard for the interests of her own children ought to determine any mother and daughter of a right way of thinking, to overlook all former slights offered to herself or her husband. Unluckily, at that period of universal belligerence, frigates were not as now at the disposal of every Right Reverend or K.C.B., despatched beyond the line to be put out of his pain by the miasma of some oriental settlement. The sailing of the India fleet was annual and peremptory; and Lady Gertrude was not only engrossed by the onerous labours of preparing her little family for so long a voyage in so short a time, but felt it her duty to convey them to Glasgow previous to their departure, to receive the parting benediction of the aged parents of her own beloved Herbert, and the affectionate farewell of his only sister, Mrs. Macfarlane. No time remained, therefore, for a protracted negotiation with Lady Fairford, through the medium of friends, or friends' friends; and, on reaching the island of Ceylon, the only regret experienced by the wife of the new Governor arose from the remembrance of having been obliged to quit her native country unsanctioned by the forgiveness of her surviving parent. Lady Fairford was, however, still in the prime of life; and Gertrude consoled herself with the idea that absence would do wonders towards a reconciliation, and, that on her return to England, in the course of eight or ten years, her mother's arms would open to receive her.

Other people thought otherwise: for, soon after Herbert Cunynghame's inauguration into his new dignities (when extracts from the Colombo Gazette had duly illuminated the London journals with an account of the firing of guns, and addresses by the inhabitants of the Cingalese provinces, in honour of his arrival,) a certain Mrs. Maitland, —a widow,—a distant relative of her late father,—profited by a temporary derangement of Lady Fairford's health, to insinuate herself as a permanent visiter into the mansion in Piccadilly. Whether suffering only from the enervation consequent on a long career of London vigils, or whether secretly disturbed by the unexpected departure of her daughter, (whom she had gratified herself with the hope of beholding, at Lord Fairford's death, reduced to the verge of ruin, and abjectly submitting to her imperious terms of reconciliation,) it is certain that she was glad to secure in Mrs. Maitland an untireable auditress of her invectives against unequal marriages,—forfeiture of *caste*, —and rebellion against the prejudices of society: while Mrs. Maitland having found it expedient to establish herself as a *souffre douleur* in the family of her opulent relative, did not hesitate to afford an unfailing echo to these haughty maxims and contemptuous innuendoes. The handsome widow had two portionless girls, training at a fashionable boarding-school for the matrimonial profession; and was well aware that they could not be more boldly thrust upon the notice of society, than by the still distinguished and ever prosperous Lady Fairford. Under these expectations, Mrs. Maitland, whose address, and air, and position placed her far above the vocation of the hireling toady, contrived to divert the attention of the Countess from her own pains and aches, by incessantly exasperating her mind against the crimes and misdemeanors of Lady Gertrude Cunynghame; till, at length, on receiving notice from the India House of the arrival of a magnificent set of sandal-wood furniture, carved with the family arms, and consigned to her by the lady of his Excellency, the Governor of Ceylon, Lady Fairford actually dictated to Mrs. Maitland an order that the costly gift should be sold to defray its expenses, or despatched back to Colombo by the next outward-bound fleet.

This harsh and uncourteous measure was instigated by Mrs. Maitland, chiefly for the gratification of that malice which regarded the daughter of her patroness, (although a

discarded daughter,) as a rival near the throne. But it was for the gratification of her curiosity and love of pleasure, that she soon afterwards persuaded Lady Fairford to join the rush of pilgrims to Notre Dame, when the pacification of Europe suddenly threw open the continent to the ten thousand of our insolvent or squandering fellow-countrymen who resolved on instant emigration. Already wearied to satiety by the routine of London life, a foreign tour promised a thousand excitements to the restless, discontented, rebellious child of fortune; and dropping gold on her road (as if, like Hop o'my Thumb with his pebbles, to secure a clew for her return,) the Countess Dowager, of Fairford, and suite took their departure for Paris. The whips of Quillacq's postillions could not have cracked louder for a Pacha with three tails, than they did for the English Peeress with her three travelling carriages.

The good city of Paris, just emancipated from the horde of Goths and Vandals by whose iron heels it had been almost stamped into dust, was as yet unfamiliarized with the aspect and travelling carriages of British peeresses. After a hearty laugh at her ladyship's small bonnet and large waist, and the still more diminutive bonnet and more ample waist of Mrs. Maitland, they readily consented to do homage to a "*Miladi qui possedait un million de rentes, et des seigneuries a ne point compter;*" and who was, moreover, distinguished by the friendship of the influential, and potential, and popular "*Madame de Caselri.*" Lady Fairford's diamonds, which were as well known in May Fair as the stone supporters on the gate at Chesterfield House, were new to the wonder of the *Chaussee d' Antin;* her address exhibited too much of the *vieille cour* not to be appreciated in a city where manners make the woman as well as the man; and above all, Fairford Castle had been rendered, by her ostentatious patronage at the period of the Revolution, a refuge for the destitute French *noblesse* and starving princes. Any one of these advantages would have been sufficient to decide her *succes de societe,* in the capricious but calculating capital of France. United, they did wonders; and Madame la Comtesse de Fèrefure, installed for a year or two in the hotel of a Bonapartean Marshal, with a suite of state apartments gorgeous with the spoil and burglary of a dozen kingdoms, became a far greater personage than she had ever found herself at Fairford Castle, or in her circumscribed drawing-room tripar-

tite in Piccadilly. It was an amusement for a week to sail along her magnificent galleries, and trace the progress of Napoleon's campaigns in the Correggio, offered as a bribe by the Duke of Modena;—the Salvator, filched from a superannuated Cardinal;—the antique bronzes, *taken* at or from Caserta;—the Murillos, which a Spanish convent had been reduced to flames to render houseless;—and the Dresden vases, bullied out of a paralytic Silesian Dowager.

But during the ensuing weeks *Madame de Ferefureet sa belle parente* found much better diversion for their leisure. By the re-feoffment of the Faubourg St. Germain with those Duchesses and Princesses of the *ancient regime* whom the guillotine and the Père Elisé had spared, the Countess found herself established in an atmosphere perfectly congenial to her feelings; and by her own instalment as the leading favourite of the Château, she was instantaneusly canonized as the idol of the aristocratic votaries whose worship was so precious in her eyes. Great as is the influence of wealth in our own metropolis, it is far greater in Paris; where a wider field of selfish enjoyment lies at the purchase of its possessor. With us, even when combined with the distinctions of rank, opulence serves only to elevate the pedestal from which the lordly Crœsus looks down upon mankind: while our Gallic neighbours, more active in the search of personal gratification, gather in crowds around the pedestal, swelling his importance by their identification with his pursuits and pleasures. In Piccadilly, Lady Fairford was only one of the giants, stalking pompously and of her own accord in the solemn pageantry of London representation;—in the Rue Montblanc, she was seated on a golden car, and impelled forward (like Guido's Aurora) amid a throng of dancing Hours and rosy Nymphs. Her progress was an ovation. After clinging like a bat to the dark ponderous rafters of Fairfold Castle for a series of tedious winters, she suddenly found herself hovering like a butterfly over a parterre of the gayest flowers of summer.

It was lucky for the interests of Lady Gertrude and her five children, that the Countess was not a few years younger; or rather—for at Paris no woman is too old to be young—that her weakness was of the head, rather than of the heart. The pride and vanity of being so much the object of attention, afforded her sufficient motive to devote her

mornings to the mantua-makers and milliners,—her evenings to the *grand monde*. But she had nothing to gain by marriage under the existing impossibility of allying herself with the blood royal: and as to personal predilections, her tepid passion in her teens for Claudius Dalrymple, formed the only irruption of her feelings upon record. If the beautiful Lady Fairford of five and twenty remained insensible to the constellation of Carlton House, with all its stars, the Lady Fairford of twice those years was very unlikely to lose her scoriated heart among the gouty courtiers of the gout *Double neuf*. Several toddling old Dukes were heard to protest that "*Madame de ferefure etait d'un ton admirable et fort bien conservee;*" but it was for another set of old women that this conversation was exercised. It was for the adoration of the Dowagers of the Faubourg, the "Comtesses d'Escarbagnas," that the veteran peeress now composed her face and ruffled her plumes.

Mrs. Maitland, whose fair daughters were being "finished" in a fashionable *pension* of the Champs Elysees, contented herself with shining in the gloriole of her noble friend; and never had the heartless pride of woman graced the halls of the Louvre with a more decided triumph, since the days of Madame de Maintenon. Lady Fairford's splended Château in the neighbourhood of Paris exhibited all the lavish luxury of a *fermier general*. With Talleyrand or Talleyrand's master as the partner of her whist, Chateaubriand as the poet of her Album, Gérard as the illuminator of her scrap-book, Viotti as her chef d'orchestre, Blangini as her ballad singer, and Talma as the director of her private theatricals, *la Comtesse Anglaise* made war upon Time—keeping him at bay, like Pope's Belinda, with the point of a golden bodkin.

CHAPTER VI.

Malheur à qui les dieux accordent de longs jours;
Consumé de douleurs vers la fin de leur cours,
Il voit autour de lui tout périr, tout changer,
Et à la race nouvelle se trouve étranger. ST. LAMBERT.

TEN years of the "certain age" of a mere woman of the world afford but a monotonous record for the amplification

of the novelist. Without the shade of human passions, the light of human virtues to vary the surface, the picture of life becomes a blank; or is filled out with paltry details of selfish pain and frivolous pleasure, fatal to all grandeur of design. The Countess Dowager grew older and uglier, but neither better nor wiser. Tired of the dissipation of Paris, (or eclipsed by Madame de Cayla) she made the tour of Italy; and gloried in knowing that half a dozen capitals had now confirmed the fiat of her native country, that she was a woman of unexceptionable good breeding, and regal magnificence. Florence, Rome, and Naples concurred with the Faubourg in the opinion that her diamonds were finer than those of any subject (out of Russia;)—and that not a royal retinue of all Italy could vie in magnificence with her own.

Mean while the roof of Court Ormleen gave way to the winds of heaven. Its carved gallery of black oak fell in when the Countess was lining her corridors at Monbijou with footcloths of crimson velvet, for the reception of the French princes; and the rats gnawed their way through the picture of her grandfather, the 17th and last Lord Ormleen, while she was giving an illuminated regatta, at Lucca, to the Grand Duke of Tuscany!

But Maitland Hill bore a far more heavy accusation against her hardness of heart. While its noble gardens sprang up into a wild luxuriance of bloom,—while the healthful sun beamed gladness on its green meadows, and the salubrious breezes wantoned in its woods, young Cunynghame, the only son of her only child, fell a sacrifice to the fervid climate of Ceylon:—her paternal hall stood tenantless, while their future inheritors were driven to seek a home—*a grave*—in a foreign land!—A few of the annual thousands lavished by the ostentatous Dowager in royal entertainments, would have warranted Lady Gertrude and her amiable husband in completing the education of their family in their own beloved country!

Nor, however heartless and triumphant in her career, did the Countess manage to escape the vexations of life. She had originally adopted her poor relation as an inmate, with a view to her own convenience; holding out expectations of future patronage to Floriana and Eliza Maitland, by way of better security over the services of her protegée. Whenever Mrs. Maitland relaxed in her attentions, grew hoarse while reading aloud, or pleaded a headach when

there were letters or notes to be written, the Dowager began to talk of making her will; or spoke of the splendid balls with which, *if circumstances permitted*, she intended to grace the début of the Misses Maitland. The crafty widow accordingly resumed her obsequiousness, with a view to secure for her daughters, such an entrée into society as might place them in the career of fortune; and, on Lady Fairford's departure for Italy, actually procured them the benefit of seats in the ladies' maids' barouche, that they might complete at Naples that wonderful work of art,——the superficial education commenced at Paris.

It was on the ninth winter of Lady Fairford's absence from England, and two years following that of young Herbert Cunynghame's death, that her ladyship took possession of the splendid suite of rooms in the Piazzi di Spagna, which she had promised to render the scene of a course of *fetes*, calculated to dazzle the whole College of Cardinals, in honour of the introduction of the two daughters of Mrs. Maitland; and grateful, indeed, was the anticipation of her splendours to the self-important Dowager. Without the slightest interest in the welfare of either Floriana or Eliza Maitland, she was in hopes that tidings of the liberality of her patronage might reach Ceylon, to call forth the tardy repentance of her daughter; and, moreover, considered herself pledged to society that any member of her family whom she deigned to recognise, should form a good establishment on the strength of so illustrious a connexion.

When, lo! just as the Miss Maitlands were drawn forth from their obscurity, and about to enter the market, —just when the ostentatious joys of patronage were dawning on the Dowager,—it pleased a certain half-doting Lord Grampus,—a man making the gastronomic tour of Europe, eating his way from the "lazy Scheldt" to "the wandering Po;" and, like Falstaff, "old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails,"—to fall in love with Mrs. Maitland. Having been seated by her side one day at dinner at the Hanoverian Ambassador's, when his palate was exquisitely tickled with some tunny dressed with citron juice, a confusion arose in the vacuum which ought to have been filled with his mind, as to the source of his gratification. He was, by no means, sure that the flavour of the Mediterranean fish was not heightened by the conversation of the handsome widow, his neighbour, who dis-

coursed such excellent music touching made dishes and simple, and the whole philosophy of the frying-pan:—and lest he should lose sight of the only lady he had ever seen worthy to have been a cook, he tendered his coronet to her acceptance on the following day, and was rewarded with her fair hand on the following month. As he pressed it to his heart, it occurred to him that it wanted only a little stuffing in the palm, to be as white and tender as a sweetbread!

All this was wormwood to Lady Fairford. She could boast no share in the match; she had been placed in the confidence neither of bride nor bridegroom. Her cunning relative knew her too well to trust the secret of her engagement with one who would probably oppose some vile counterplot to the scheme; and kept the business a profound secret till the very eve of her nuptials. Lady Fairford scorned, however, to own herself outwitted. She never told the world she was angry; never boasted herself to have been ill-used; but received Lord and Lady Grampus as graciously, and appeared as much enchanted with the match, as if its hero were a Welsh curate, and her beloved friend had the prospect of starvation before her eyes. In the idea that the bride and bridegroom would establish themselves at Rome for the remainder of the carnival, Lady Fairford took occasion to be ill, and compelled her courtly physician to issue a mandate ordering her to Naples for change of air. She had no particular tie or attraction to that gay city of Lazzaroni and Maccaroni; but any thing to escape the annoyance of witnessing Lady Grampus's inauguration into the aristocratic estate!

"At least," observed the unhappy Dowager, now reduced to the solitary sovereignty of her travelling chariot, "at least, I shall get rid of the chorus of absurd enthusiasts who affect to rave of Miss Eliza's beauty and Miss Floriana's accomplishments. I really believe they fancy they are paying their court to me by an incessant quotation of the Maitlands. Blockheads!—as if all the world did not know that we have ten chances to one of pleasing people by addressing them with abuse of their nearest relatives!"

Arrived at Naples, things were worse than ever. Scarcely had Lady Fairford settled herself as the centre of a coterie of primero-playing Principesse and Abbati,

to whom her costly mode of living entitled her to expound both the law and her own grievances, when Lord and Lady Grampus, despitefully and with malice aforethought, made their appearance: installed themselves within view of her dwelling; and, instead of deigning to take offence in return for all they gave, displayed the most provoking determination to be on the best terms with their dear relative. The Dowager was ready to expire with indignation on learning her promoted toady's universal declaration that she had been induced to pass the remainder of the winter at Naples, by her anxiety to show some little kindness to an aged relative, whose temper was calculated to tire the patience of all who were not bound by the tie of consanguinity to the endurance of her caprices.

Lady Grampus had, in fact, led too disagreeable a life not to profit eagerly by the change of her destinies. She could not afford to lose a single day's enjoyment of the comforts and conveniences suddenly placed within her reach; and finding that Naples presented a promising market of English lordlings and heirs apparent, hastened thither to form an establishment on the footing she judged advantageous to the interests of her daughters. Her hospitality was inferior only to that of the Ambassador; her personal importance secondary to none. It was not, indeed, that the bridegroom lordship's income by any means rivalled that of the Dowager; but the mature bride had other sources of popularity. She had two daughters capable of out-smiling, out-talking, out-dancing, out-singing all the smilers, talkers, dancers, and singers of Naples; and herself exhibited, though in the wane of her charms, one of the loveliest sunsets that ever glowed upon a ball-room. Having been thought handsome even while only Mrs. Maitland and a hanger-on, she became a divinity as a peeress and the proprietress of a cook of unblemished reputation; nor was it surprising that the united merits of cook, maitre-d'hotel, daughters, and mother, should command the allegiance of the Neapolitan coteries. Alceste himself did not unfold a finer vein of misanthropy than poor Lady Fairford, on beholding the patrician crowd fly to feed their affection at the table of the gastronomic bridegroom.

It would in truth have been better for the comfort of her declining years, had the Lady of Court Ormleen

turned her horses' heads towards England on quitting Rome, instead of pursuing her way

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,"

towards a city where she was destined to a thousand unanticipated mortifications; such as neither splendour of equipage nor establishment,—neither the excellence of her box at San Carlo, nor the distinction of her reception at court,—could wholly obliterate.

"Have you seen much of the Dalrymples?" inquired the affectionate relative who had travelled from Rome to be her incubus, in the course of one of her first interviews with Lady Fairford.

"What Dalrymples—The Duke and Duchess?"

"Oh, no! the people who made themselves so popular at Naples a year or two ago, whom the Queen was so fond of,—and who gave such brilliant parties."

"Any relations to Lord Inverarie?"

"I believe so; but Lord Dalrymple's title is a creation."

"*Lord* Dalrymple?—You do not mean the Admiral?"

"Exactly!—Lady Dalrymple, poor thing, being in a dreadful state of health, a frigate was given to her son expressly to bring her to Italy. She passed a year at Naples with all her family, and was perfectly adored here."

"Then why did she go away?—I am sure people did not trouble themselves about her in England. She had better have remained at Naples for the remainder of her days."

"And so she did. She died here."

"Claudius Dalrymple's wife dead!" exclaimed Lady Fairford. "He must have felt her loss severely."

"He did—he does; for after passing the winter in strict retirement in Sicily, and the summer in cruising about the Mediterranean with his son, he returns hither, chiefly for the consolation of living where he last lived with his wife, and dying where she died."

"And his daughters?"——

"The eldest, Lady Napier, who presides over his house, is the widow of a naval officer. Helen, the youngest, is married to Sir Digby King, and is a charming creature. I thought you must have known Lord Dalrymple, he being so nearly connected with the late Lord Fair-

ford?" continued Lady Grampus, looking her former patroness maliciously in the face, for she was well aware of the exact state of their early connexion.

"Yes!—I knew him;—but his wife was one of those yea-nay people, for whom one never feels the slightest interest; and so we have managed to lose sight of each other, and I have seen nothing of the family for years."

"For whom one never feels! You speak of course impersonally,—for *one* person has felt and feels an interest for poor Lady Dalrymple, rarely equalled in this obdurate world! Her monument exists in the haggard countenance of her husband."

"Well—well,"—cried Lady Fairford, peevishly. "We are at least secure from the disagreeable spectacle of such a *memento mori*. People of so much sensibility as this Dalrymple tribe, will of course avoid the contact of the crowd."

"I trust you will frequently meet them at my house. The only son, Captain Dalrymple, is a great admirer of my girls."

It might be difficult to determine whether the words "MY HOUSE," in the lips of the quondam toady, or the announcement of Lord Dalrymple's arrival at Naples and affliction as a widower, produced the more disagreeable impression on the Lady of Court Ormleen.

CHAPTER VII.

Her new-set jewels round her robe are plac'd;
Some in a brilliant buckle bind her waist,
Some round her neck a circling light display,
Some in her hair diffuse a trembling ray:
The silver knot o'erlooks the waving lace,
And adds becoming beauties to her face.

GAY.

IT was a grievous mortification to Lady Fairford, to observe that Lady Grampus and her daughters were warmly welcomed in the highest circles of the court and city of Naples; as well as in many a giddy scene of festivity, unsuitable to her age, her dignity, and position in the

world. She had no chance of talking them down, or looking them down, or depreciating their popularity. Youth, beauty, and accomplishments afforded them a strong-hold from whence they could defy her ill-nature; and anxious as she was to mortify her rebel protégée, she at length found herself reluctantly compelled to join the chorus of her ladyship's votaries. The inconveniences of a winter journey alone induced her to brave the annoyance of witnessing the triumphant debut of the Misses Maitland; but she resolved to seize the earliest opportunity of breaking through her foreign connexions, and returning to her native country.

Mean while, and with feelings of ill-suppressed disgust, Lady Fairford prepared to attend a court gala, given on occasion of a royal birth day. All her splendours were to be exhibited; for it was evident that her sole chance of outshining the bride was through the medium of her family jewels. A robe of the richest velvet, adorned with costly sable, was selected as accordant with her years; and strings, and bandeaux, and aigrettes of costly diamonds, adorned her withered throat and plumed toque. Sailing through the suite of regal apartments, escorted by her lean yellow *patito*, Prince Ludovico Aspradelvalle, and an Englishman named Sir Holofernes Rodomont, (much commended by the Abbate Mai to her ladyship's good dinners, as a very rising young man,) she had full faith in the assurance of her old beau and her favourite waiting-maid that she was still the finest woman in Naples, and ten years younger in appearance than the presumptuous lady of Lord Grampus; and it was no small gratification to her, when the obnoxious party entered the presence, that they should find her honoured with a seat at a royal card-table, while they, after a cold and careless greeting, were obliged to mingle with the throng.

Looking up from the interesting confusion of spades, diamonds, clubs, and hearts, on which her attention had been riveted, the Countess raised her diamond eye-glass to reconnoitre the Grampus group, stripped by the presence of majesty of all their factitious pride of fashion; when, just as she was preparing to exterminate the bride by a patronizing bow, her eye was caught by a spectacle, causing her hollow heart to thrill and the frigid current of her blood to wax hot within her. For the first time during thirty years, a genuine blush overspread her world-worn

face! Despite the royal partner, who marked her bewilderment with indignation, and the odd trick which waited her return to reason, she sat with her eyes fixed (the diamond eye-glass no longer needful to assist her myopic vision) on a figure which had entered, and was departing with the Grampus train. Her breath grew short;—dreams of the past thronged upon her mind. She was once more Geraldine Lady Ormleen; no longer the wife or widow of the sullen Earl of Fairford, but the daughter of Sir Patrick Maitland:—the lover of her youth was before her!—

But no!—On the head of the veteran Dalrymple the snows of sixty years must now be lying;—on *his* cheek, time must have ploughed its accustomed furrows, even before domestic affliction did its part in the work of devastation:—while the figure which so captivated her attention was bright with the graceful dignity of early manhood. It contained the promise not the wreck, of a hero! Unless *she*, too, had supernaturally retrograded through forty years of her ill-spent life, it could not be Claudius Dalrymple who stood before her.

Yet it was Claudius! Claudius the second,—Claudius, the son of Claudius;—not of the poor despised brother of Lord Fairford, but of the wealthy Lord Dalrymple. The illustrious condition of the personages among whom she was placed, forebade the Dowager to investigate the affair by interrogation; but having been released from her dignified durance towards the close of the evening, she sailed into the ball-room, and had no difficulty in recognising the mysterious unknown as the object of Lady Grampus's bland adulation, and in ascertaining his name and nature from her ladyship's lord.

"Fine young man!" cried his lordship, in reply to Lady Fairford's roundabout inquiries. "Lady Grampus is of opinion he has taken a fancy to her youngest daughter; and nothing would gratify me more than such an alliance for my daughter-in-law. Between ourselves, Lady Fairford, there is the best black-cock on Lord Dalrymple's moors of any in Scotland; and the Captain himself assured me that in a tarn of his mother's estate in the Highlands, are to be found those identical delicate lake trout, which many people fancy are only met with in the Tyrolian and Styrian lakes.—Your ladyship has no conception what they are when eaten with caper sauce!"

"And does Lord Dalrymple favour the connexion? I

understand he derives a magnificent property from his late wife, whom he affected, you know, to marry for love; and who proved to be the niece and heiress of some vulgar old Bombay agent who advertised for his relations. He will probably expect much in a wife for his eldest son."

"Oh! as to Lord Dalrymple, the less we say about him the better. A very singular man, Lady Fairford!—a person of a very strange way of thinking. I remember dining with him in London, in Lady Dalrymple's time, and there was on the table—but it is useless to talk of it now!—If people of a certain rank are sometimes tempted to outrage decency in so gross a manner, perhaps the best thing one can do is to forget it."

"Decency?"—interrupted the Dowager, aghast.

"Decency!"—persisted his lordship, with an air of nausea. "I cannot speak in milder terms of a roasted hind-quarter of lamb!"

His lordship's look of loathing did not, however, equal that of Lady Fairford, as she proceeded to note the manœuvres practised by the mother of Floriana and Eliza, to entangle Claudius Claudison. She, who was so familiarly acquainted with the whole catalogue of Maitland smiles, could readily detect the super-saccharine sweetness of countenance, assumed in honour of the inheritor of the gallant admiral's coronet, and old Sinclair's hundreds of thousands. She saw him stand between the Misses Maitland, like Garrick between tragedy and comedy,—now inclining towards the brilliant vivacity of Floriana, now towards the soft sensibility of the blue-eyed Eliza,—till she longed to whisper a word of warning in his ear. Even Sir Holofernes Rodomont, a very solemn young gentleman of the march of intellect school, who was supposed to have followed them from Rome, smitten with admiration of the universality of their "nullidge" and accomplishments, was neglected for the sake of this newer speculation. Lady Fairford felt herself destined to be a martyr! To have that revolted spirit, the toady she had cherished in her bosom, promoted into a Viscountess, and one of her toady's rebellious imps elevated into a Lady Dalrymple!—it was almost too direful a shock for her declining years.

Mean while, there was no hope that the stern old man, who lingered at Naples chiefly in the hope that he should never quit the spot again, would be roused to the perilous

position of the gallant son forming so noble a representative of his own spirited youth. Lord Dalrymple was too much of an invalid to enter into general society; and in the limited circle with which Lady Napier occasionally ventured to enliven their desolate home, the Maitland crew were artful enough to subdue their tone into that mildness of gentle discretion consonant with his taste. Their simplest costume, their softest looks, their lowliest words, were always at command to grace the humdrum parties of Captain Dalrymple's sister. It rejoiced them not a little that at such moments they were secure from the observation of their dreaded foe, Lady Fairford. They were too well aware of the vigilance and maliciousness of her scrutiny, not to apprehend that she would at once detect their project of appropriating Claudius the wealthy to one sister, and Holofernes the wise to the other. The choice and its alternative were immaterial to the whole family.

CHAPTER VIII.

A shallow brain behind a serious mask,
An oracle within an empty cask,
The solemn fop, significant and budge,—
A fool with judges—among fools, a judge—
He says but little, and that little said
Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead. COWPER.

OBSTINATE persons, intent on the accomplishment of a darling project, are seen to sacrifice even their animosities in the struggle. Lady Fairford, in her eagerness to revenge on the Maitlands their base evasion of her tyranny, overlooked at once her pride and her long-cherished hatred of the offspring of Miss Janet Sinclair; and actually stooped to solicit an introduction to Claudius Dalrymple,—the hero of every ball-room, every tableau, every festina, which the Dowager of Court Ormleen honoured with her presence. But it so happened that whenever her ladyship's envoys were despatched in search of him for the performance of the ceremony, he was always too busily engaged in acting, or dancing, or dealing at

ecarté, or carriage-seeking for the Maitlands, to be forthcoming; and a woman less absorbed in the object of the introduction might have been induced to suspect his disinclination to form her acquaintance. But Lady Fairford was wholly engrossed by her anxiety to beguile him from the Maitland faction, and dreamed not of his predetermination against enrolling himself in her own.

"Pray tell your friend Captain Dalrymple," said her ladyship with unusual amenity to Sir Holofernes Rodomont the prosy, "that since his father, my worthy and esteemed friend Lord Dalrymple, is precluded by the infirmity of his health from acting as master of the ceremonies between us, I trust he will waive all unnecessary form, and accompany you to my hotel."

"I have already done myself the honour of delivering one message from your ladyship to that flattering effect," said Sir Holofernes. "But Captain Dalrymple, like most of his hyperborean nation and rude profession, is a very inaccessible person—a *vastly* inaccessible person. It may be observed, indeed, as a general rule, notwithstanding the present universal spread of *nullidge*, that wherever the early education and habits of subordination of an individual have been, as in the present instance, of a nature opposed to——"

"Did you express to Captain Dalrymple," interrupted the Dowager, "that you were commissioned by *myself* to propose the visit?"

"Although I may presume to doubt," said Sir Holofernes, "whether, in the present state of the cultivation of the human mind,—at a moment I may say, indeed, when we behold the moral condition of Europe bearing universal testimony to the astounding spread of *nullidge*, and to its influence on every branch of the relations of the social world,—any thing approaching to subterfuge or——"

"And he absolutely declined to accompany you to my house?" hastly inquired Lady Fairford, on foreseeing no termination to so Johnsonian an harangue.

"Your ladyship will do me the honour to pardon me. Captain Dalrymple's negative was only inferential. He informed me that he should take an early opportunity of profiting by your flattering permission; and whereas six weeks have since elapsed, and whereas, according to your ladyship's own statement, the promise has not been fol-

lowed by any attempt at fulfilment,—we are at liberty to deduce from such premises that——"

"—Your friend has been too much occupied to fulfil *his* intentions. You have, therefore, only to remind him of his engagement."

"Pardon me, my dear madam, if I presume to view the case in a point of view different from that conceived by your ladyship. I have often observed, and I rather think you will find my opinion borne out by several of those classical authorities, which form the ground-work of all modern *nullidge,* that the arbitrary admeasurement of time——"

"I quite agree with you!" cried the Dowager, to the impracticable agent she had selected for her commission; and turning to Prince Ludovico Aspradelvalle, with a demand for the news of the day in order to silence the peroration of the tedious Rodomont, she affected a degree of indifference on the subject which she was far from feeling.

Nor did her restless interest in Captain Dalrymple diminish, on observing that he had actually installed himself as the *cavaliere* of the Maitlands, and was perpetually by their side—riding, walking, singing, dancing, flirting. No person exactly understood which of the two sisters was elected as the partner of his future honours; but every one saw that they had gained a most active ally in their covert warfare against their noble kinswoman; that wherever they chanced to meet, *his* smiles and innuendos were directed against Lady Fairford as bitterly as their own.—The enmity of Lady Grampus and her daughters was easily to be accounted for; their narrow minds were irritated by the consciousness of obligation. But what had she done to provoke the animosity of Captain Dalrymple?

It was in vain that she attempted, on *her* part, to seduce the coteries of Naples from their prejudice in favour of the younger Claudius. In spite of all she had to urge against his boorish manners and ill-breeding, they persisted in seeing in him a spirited gentlemanly young man, endowed with all the virtues that usually adorn the heir to twenty thousand a-year The world appeared to be as faithfully attached to him, as he to the fair daughters-in-law of the gastrophilite Grampus.

Her ladyship's heart was now "fracted and corrobo-

rate!" The humble devotedness of Prince Ludovico, the long-winded allegiance of Sir Holofernes, the homage of the Cardinal Legate, and the tender friendship of legions of princes, princesses, abbati, and English travellers without end, were insufficient to console her for the success of her near and dear relations, the Maitlands, or the cool contempt of the Dalrymples.

Sweet was the hour, and joyous was the day, when the sun shone, at length, upon her well-packed travelling-carriage, and she saw herself on the eve of departure for the land she had quitted in a fit of pique and pride, and which she was about to re-enter under a similar influence; when, on the very evening preceding her departure, (a little circle of her immediate acquaintance being collected in her honour,) Sir Holofernes, on perceiving that her attention was fully occupied, hastened to inflict his tediousness upon her patience.

"It will doubtless prove a subject of regret to a person of your ladyship's kindly warmth of feeling, enhanced, moreover, in the instance to which I am about to allude, by the close claims of consanguinity," said he, with the genuine pertinacity of a bore, "to learn the very unhandsome manner in which Lord Dalrymple has been pleased to interfere in the affair of his son's attachment."

"The Maitlands are but distant connexions of my family, Sir Holofernes, nor have I any reason to interest myself in their proceedings," said the Dowager, haughtily.

"But on the occasion in question," pursued Rodomont with a vague stare, and his usual flow of milk-and-water eloquence, "the objections offered against the young lady being, in fact, a deliberate offence levelled against yourself—"

"I do not understand you," cried Lady Fairford, impatiently; "few people *can;* and as my carriage is announced, you will oblige me by explaining the business as concisely as possible."

"In one word then," said the angry orator, for once piqued into that brevity which in that instance was less "the soul of wit" than of ill-nature, "old Dalrymple, on being applied to for his consent, protested he would be d—d before he permitted a son of his to match with kith, kin, or acquaintance of the Countess of Fairford! I have the honour to wish your ladyship a good night and a prosperous journey."

CHAPTER IX.

Hame, hame, hame, in my ain countrie.
ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

SOME excitement is always to be derived from the act of setting foot in our native country, our native metropolis;—even when, as in the instance of the Dowager Lady Fairford, no affectionate hand extends itself to welcome us home. A ship entering a harbour, whether freighted with ingots or paving-stones,—whether bound from Belfast or Pondicherry,—is ever an object of interest to the spectators; and a lady, who wears in her equipage, suite, and habiliments, the announcement of foreign travel, or a long residence in some remote country,—more especially if a countess, *still* more especially if a wealthy countess like the peeress of Court Ormleen,—is sure of a transient popularity among the wonder-mongers of May Fair.

In the higher classes, where a tone of undeviating and consequently monotonous good-breeding prevails, where mankind and womankind, or rather lordkind and ladykind, are formed upon one absolute and single model,—where there is but one topic, one costume, one shade of smile, one mode of existence admissible as of the true faith,—it is a charming relief to fall in with persons privileged for a time to maintain their originality. In so exact a system of the heavenly bodies, a comet affords a beautiful irregularity. Lady Fairford's friends, who would not have cared the sixth split of a straw for her, had they been in the habit of meeting her from the commencement of the season, were lavish of their visits and invitations, with the view of seeing some hat or turban of foreign growth, some necklace or bracelet of Roman setting, and hearing some delightful, inedited anecdote of Rossini or Thorwaldsen.

She opened her house,—renewed her establishment; the newspapers gave due notice of "a series of dinners,

assemblies, concerts, and balls, about to be given by the Dowager Countess of Fairford to the fashionable world;" —and the fashionable world, accordingly, crowded with its visiting tickets to her door. For the first month after her arrival in town, her porter stood with an outstretched hand receiving cards, in the attitude of a popular physician palming his fee.

Femme propose,—Dieu dispose!—Instead of the series of entertainments announced by the Dowager, funeral baked meats were more appropriate to the occasion; and instead of the Parisian toques and Roman bracelets of which she had projected the exhibition, decency demanded a sable suit, with all its mummery of jet and bugles. The same paper whose eloquence had been taxed to describe the triumphal arrival of Lady Gertrude Cunynghame, in Ceylon, now recorded her triumphal departure. But there was no longer any venality in its tribute to her virtues:—*she was no more!* Lady Fairford's anxiety to mortify and afflict her,—her own eager wishes for a reconciliation with her surviving parent,—all were rendered abortive; and though the Colombo Gazette duly commemorated that the exemplary wife of the Governor had left to the world four copies of her excellence in the form of four lovely daughters, her mother would as soon have thought of producing four ourang-outangs in the fashionable world to be put to shame by the graces and charms of the Miss Maitlands,—now on the eve of their London debut,—as of extending her protection to a group of awkward ill-bred colonial beauties, as unaccomplished as they were unattractive. The eldest must, perforce, succeed to the honours of Court Ormleen, now that Lady Gertrude was out of the question; and the very name of grand-daughter (that stigma of female affinity) was twice aggravated by the claim of heiress-apparent. After having done her utmost towards the starvation of the future peeress, it was unlikely the Dowager should lament that a five months' voyage divided their hereditary enmities. She knew nothing of these offspring of the obscure Cunynghame, who had so long been a stumbling-block of offence in her path; and had no desire to amend her ignorance.

Mean while, Lady Grampus profited hastily by the month of seclusion to which she knew so rigorous an upholder of etiquette as Lady Fairford would condemn her-

self on the decease of a near relative, to produce her own paragons in the beau-monde, secure from the malicious comments of her former patroness. The result exceeded her most sanguine expectations. Beauty is a very beautiful thing; and two handsome girls, whose manners and style of dress were unimpeachable even by the most fastidious club committee or envious maiden coterie, could not but attract a crowd of admirers. No ball was perfect without their presence; no *tableau* could be arranged, no proverbe represented, without their participation. The position of their mother was exactly such as admitted of general approach. She was, at present, so imperfectly established in the beau-monde, that the whole mob of diamond necklaces and satin gowns formed a desirable addition to her acquaintance. There would be a time hereafter for fastidiousness. At present, her business was to marry her daughters; and repudiating the Tassoian adage that

"Quanto si mostra men, tanto più è bella,"—

Lady Grampus was of opinion that her own fair progeny formed an exception to the rule; that *they* could not be too much seen, or too much heard. Floriana and Eliza accordingly smiled every where, sang every where, danced every where; and the sudden animation succeeding their announcement, and the rush towards the door marking their entrée into all the ball-rooms of May Fair, certainly seemed to accredit the tactics of the family. For the first fortnight, they were the beauties of the season. The most fastidious ineffables ventured upon an introduction; and it became an anxious question, *which* among the bachelor Dukes and Marquesses they would deign to honour with their preference. But all enthusiasm is of brief duration. The world had been so much enchanted by its first glimpse, that it was impossible to keep up the illusion. Had the Maitlands begun by being mere mortals,—very charming mortals,—the mania might have lasted. But having commenced their career as divinities, and shortly evinced symptoms of mortality, the world grew ashamed of its idolatrous worship. At the close of a month, the "new beauties" became the "Miss Maitlands;"—and at the close of *two*, "those Maitland girls." The reaction was proportionate with

the original infatuation; it was surprising how bitterly society avenged upon *them* its own blindness.

Such was the state of the case when Lady Fairford, emerging from her tedious family-mourning, and a still more tedious illness engendered by the seclusion to which she had been condemned, re-entered the magic portals of the great world. Albeit of an age and character which seldom interests itself with the proceedings of the rising generation, her anxiety to witness the effect produced in society by the two damsels whom it had once been her intention to present to its suffrage, induced the veteran to extend her nightly dissipation beyond the line of dinners, card parties, and concerts, to which, on her return to England, she had resolved to limit her views. Surprised to learn from the rumours of society that Captain Dalrymple was still included, in the train of the débutantes—she inferred from the adulation still lavished upon him by Lady Grampus, that the tale with which she had been favoured by Sir Holofernes, was an evidence of the extent of his imagination, rather than of the accuracy of his "nullidge." Whatever might be the result of the dinners forced upon Claudius by the father-in-law, and the adulation with which he was beset by both mother and daughters, it was evident that no proposal had, at present, taken place. The ungracious decree of Lord Dalrymple, if issued at all, must have been merely in the way of premonition to his son.

Every vindictive feeling of the Dowager was now roused into action. Death had placed the seal of oblivion upon her maternal wrongs; and now between her desire to set at naught the authority of her former lover, and her dread of seeing a Maitland elevated to those honours so dear to her prejudices,—all her splenetic feelings were enlisted in the affair.

One night, while (with her glass fixed upon the proceedings of Eliza Maitland who, having pursued young Lord Severn into a corner, had mounted guard over him, and was waving her raven ringlets with the triumph of having captured the best match in the room) and listening to Lord Grampus's murmurs against the odious system of serving London dinners *a la Russe*, she was struck by the elegant figure of a tall, graceful girl, to whom, in defiance of Floriana's *agaceries*, Claudius Dalrymple persisted in devoting his attentions. Lady Fairford, even

previous to his ungracious provocations, had found occasion to blame the flighty familiarity of his demeanour towards the Maitlands; and she was struck by the alteration now visible in his manners.

"Who is that lovely girl?"—inquired she of the gastrophilite. "I never saw a more distinguished looking creature. None of the vulgar dash mistaken in the present day for an air of *ton*."

"I don't think much of her," replied Lord Grampus, contrasting the simple costume and unpretending air of the stranger with the glowing splendours of the daughters-in-law he was taught to consider the "glass of fashion." "She is a niece of Mrs. Macfarlane of Glenwhelan."

"I never saw her before."

"You must have met her, but she is easily overlooked. Many people think young Dalrymple is paying her attention. I should not be much surprised. He is a very unaccountable young man. I once saw him eat parmesan with brown soup.——"

"Is this Miss Macfarlane a girl of good fortune?" inquired the Dowager with some interest.

"And one day at my house, he actually called for bread-sauce with a roast landrail!—What can one expect of a man with such unsettled principles?—Between ourselves, my dear madam, I always hinted to Lady Grampus she had no chance of catching him for Floriana; and now you see he is fairly entangled by that girl yonder;—a creature as insipid as a boiled whiting."

CHAPTER X.

Ev'n though her means are few,
She will d' feat the utmost power of man;
In short, she never yet distinction drew
'Twixt right and wrong, nor squeamishly began
To calculate or weigh, save how to gain her plan.

Hogg.

Satisfied that nothing would be more mortifying to Lady Grampus, than to find the fish she had hooked break

through her insufficient tackle only to grace the nets of another, Lady Fairford became singularly interested in the event. Her immediate ties to society had been either loosened or snapt asunder by her long residence abroad; and in the lack of better incentives, she was actually allured from ball to ball, and party to party, by the desire of watching Captain Dalrymple's attentions to Miss Macfarlane of Glenwhelan, and the fretful irritation of the Maitlands on finding themselves eclipsed. An hour's endurance of the heated atmosphere and noisy crush of the fashionable world, was as much as her declining years would admit; but amid the ceremonious bows and courtesies, the formal dialogue, and unmeaning common-place which fulfilled her present duties to society, she had always leisure to note how much the unaspiring niece of Mrs. Macfarlane, with her antelope look and tranquil air, gained ground in general admiration. Instead of the restless desire of exhibition which kept Floriana and Eliza in perpetual motion, *she* was always to be sought in the back-ground;—instead of their volubility and affected animation, *she* seemed to have adopted the rule of Madame de Souza,—"*Parler bas fixe l'attention;—parler peu fixe le souvenir.*"—Had not the Countess, on her return to London, given out with needless pertinacity her determination to form no new connexions or new acquaintance, she would probably have made some effort towards an introduction to the chaperon of a person in whose favour her curiosity was so strongly moved. But she perceived with regret that Mrs. Macfarlane was only a quizzical-looking little woman in a black silk gown; and, however high the dignity of "Macfarlane of Glenwhelan," northward of the Grampians, the chieftainess was evidently nobody in the coteries of the May Fair.

Moreover, notwithstanding the uncalled-for graciousness with which her ladyship had on one occasion made room for Miss Macfarlane on the sofa beside her, one very crowded Wednesday at Almacks, when she saw her in search of a seat, there appeared a singular degree of hauteur in the courtesy with which the young lady declined the proffered favour, and hurried to the opposite side of the room. Lady Fairford, whose elevated position in the world ensured her considerable deference in society, was astonished by this tacit rejection of her overtures, till she remembered the aversion testified by Lord

Dalrymple's son, and imputed the avoidance of Miss Macfarlane to her lover's influence; but so obstinate are the prejudices of ill-governed minds, that the discourtesy of the obscure girl on whom she had been tempted to bestow her notice, seemed only to increase the admiration of the unreasonable old woman.

"*That* is the handsomest girl in London," she would say, pointing to the scornful damsel, whenever her praise was demanded for Lady Grampus's daughters or some other budding beauty of the day. "She is so well-bred,—so graceful,—there is so much ease, so much repose in her manner!" And the more she saw of the dove-eyed nymph in the black crape frock, the more decided became her disgust against the fanciful attire,—the garlands,—the "jewels, chains, and owches," of the gorgeous Maitlands.

She did not wonder that with so heavenly a contrast before their eyes, Lord Severn and his confraternity of noble bachelors should withdraw their allegiance from girls whose frivolous artificiality was manifest in every word, and look, and smile, and movement. She almost regretted that the increasing decrepitude which it was now the aim and object of her existence to conceal from the world, prevented her from indulging more largely in such social pleasures as might extend her opportunities for observation; for her friends were so well aware of the original causes of dissension between herself and the Dalrymples, and her acquaintance seeing that there was no present connexion between the two families, so seldom gratified her by making them the theme of conversation,—that she was totally unaware of her enemy the Captain's departure from London, till a paragraph met her eye in the morning papers to the following effect:—

"Naples.—We regret to learn that the state of Lord Dalrymple's health is such as to cause great alarm to his family and friends. His eldest son, Captain Dalrymple of the Royal Navy, arrived here yesterday from England, where he has been detained on family business. Very little hope is entertained of the gallant Admiral's recovery."

"I crossed my friend Captain Dalrymple at Domo d'Ossola," said Sir Holofernes Rodomont, on visiting the Countess that morning to deliver the despatches with

which he was charged by her Aspradelvallian hero. "It is to be hoped that Lady Napier's interference may produce some favourable change in the Admiral's views; for it appears that the old gentleman cannot survive many months; and should he expire without having withdrawn his interdiction to the match, Claudius is just the sort of man to stickle respecting its accomplishment. It is a strange thing that, notwithstanding the gradual intellectualization of mankind, notwithstanding the universal spread of *nullidge*——"

"Had you arrived in town a month ago, Sir Holofernes," said the Dowager, remorselessly interrupting him, "you would have perceived the fallaciousness of your views on that subject. I beg to assure you, that the extraordinary recital with which you favoured me at Naples, relative to a Captain Dalrymple's attachment to Miss Maitland, and his father's insulting terms of——"

"Miss Maitland?—Pardon me, my dear madam, pardon me!" cried Sir Holofernes, waving his head with a supercilious smile. "The *fact* is indisputable; but you appear in error with respect to the individuals implicated. You appear unaware that the aspersion hazarded by my Lord Dalrymple, regarded your ladyship's grand-daughter Miss Cunynghame,—the future Lady Ormleen!—It appears incredible, however, that at a period when the enlightenment of the human race——"

"Again I am sorry to inform you your information is incorrect. The daughters of the late Lady Gertrude Cunynghame reside in the island of Ceylon, which they have never quitted."

"To own the truth, my dear madam, Captain Dalrymple himself favoured me with an acknowledgment of his attachment to your grand-daughter, with a view to deprecate any resentment I might feel at his rejection of your ladyship's acquaintance proposed through myself; but it can scarcely be expected from a man absorbed in the severer studies,—whose mind is in fact exclusively devoted to the acquirement of useful *nullidge*——"

"It is most unfortunate," cried the Dowager, peevishly, "that you were not more explicit on the subject. Had I been aware of this attachment, I might have exerted myself in favour of the young people."

"I rather imagine," said Sir Holofernes, with inadvertent impertinence, "the greatest kindness your lady-

ship can exercise in the affair, is to refrain from interference of any kind. It appears to be only as *your* grand-child that Lord Dalrymple has conceived an antipathy to Miss Cunynghame; and though it is inconceivable that at an epoch when the progress of civilization——"

"I might at least," observed Lady Fairford, musingly, and addressing *herself* rather than her companion, "I might at least have facilitated the business by affording this poor child a home in her native country. I will write to Mr. Cunynghame by the first fleet. If he choose to consign his daughter to my protection, she can visit England without delay."

"Miss Cunynghame appears so happy and contented under the protection of her aunt," said Sir Holofernes, with his usual vague look of stultification, "and Mrs. Macfarlane appears so much attached to *her*, that it would surely be a grievance to them to separate; and although the old lady is by no means an intellectual woman,—by no means what one should expect from the sister of a man of such universal nullidge as Mr. Cunynghame,—by the way—did your ladyship ever happen to meet with the prize poem that——"

"Do you actually mean," cried Lady Fairford, almost breathless with consternation, "that the beautiful girl going about with Mrs. Macfarlane of Glenwhelan, is my grand-daughter Gertrude Cunynghame?"

"At a moment of——"

"Sir Holofernes!" exclaimed the Peeress, for once defying the etiquettes of life, "answer me without circumlocution;—yes, or no?"

"Nothing can be more unpleasant than a categorical——"

Lady Fairford threw herself back in her chair, and between agitation and wonder, gasped for breath. In the course of her sixty-three years, she had never been so near fainting as when she received from the tedious fool who was at once so chary and so lavish of his "nullidge," a direct assurance that the elegant girl who had scorned a seat on the blue satin sofa by her side, was no other than the heiress of all her honours, the object of all her evil dealings.

CHAPTER XI.

Les haines sont si longues, et si opiniâtres, que le plus grand signe de mort dans un homme malade, c'est la réconciliation.

LA BRUYERE.

EVERY thing in this world is finite. Even Eden had its limits,—even the most flowing sentence has its period. Lady Fairford, whose life was composed of uneventful to-days added to trivial yesterdays, and who had never yet paused during its lengthened course to deliberate largely on its tenour,—to reflect soberly on its past or project its future,—was now startled into a pause. No sooner did Sir Holofernes take his ceremonious leave, than she issued a prohibitory mandate of "Not at home," placed herself in her considering chair, and pondered all his sayings in her heart.

But if it proved a source of vexation to her to learn at Naples that a slight connexion with herself was sufficient to predispose Lord Dalrymple against the wife selected by his son, what was the measure of regret and resentment with which she now recognised the still harsher truth. Her grand-daughter—the future peeress of Court Ormleen—the descendant of the Earls of Fairford—rejected by the illegitimate offspring of Lord Inverarie!—ignominiously rejected, on the plea that *her* blood glowed within the veins of the despised beauty. Here was a flaw in the charter of her pride!—Not even the impertinence of her toady's ambitious alliance was to be compared with it!—

From deliberations on the fact, she came to speculations on its origin. It was plain that the gallant Admiral of many sign-posts, despised or detested her; and although she could now understand and almost excuse the antipathy betrayed by Claudius Dalrymple and Gertrude Cunynghame against a person, the sole obstacle to their mutual happiness, she was for a moment inclined to put forth the plea by which she had so long deceived herself and others into respect for her virtues, that she herself,

with the best heart in the world, had been an unintermitting victim to the wickedness of her fellow-creatures; when lo! a sharp and sudden prick of conscience suspended the argument upon her lips. At threescore years, it is time that the illusions of life should cease; it is time that we should withdraw the drapery with which we have striven to disguise those moral deformities, of which early wisdom might have suggested the cure. The first flimsy veil of sophistry she renounced, exposed enough to excite her alarm; till at length, swathe and bandage, folding and cerement, were torn away like the envelopes of a mummy, and the hideous nature of the hard, dry, blackened object within, revealed in all its hideousness! She discerned at a glance the weighty responsibility which the favours of fortune had placed in her hands; and the carelessness with which she had executed the duties of her stewardship!—

Her hereditary rank had only served to inflate her arrogance; her hereditary opulence had in no single instance been made to minister to the welfare of her fellow-creatures. She had repaid with contumely the affection of an honest heart; she had given her affections to a man whose condition she despised, and her hand to a man whose person she abhorred. She had withdrawn, in baffled pride, her affection from the child whom God had given her as a blessing; and condemned the offspring of that good and tender daughter to a pernicious existence in a distant colony.—Such was her gratitude to the Dispenser of her prosperous fortunes!—Such her mode of administering the talent committed to her charge!—

Nor did a prolonged rumination on the state of the case diminish her self-reproaches. As those who on first entering a gloomy cavern, see naught but darkness around them, are by degrees enabled to discern its circumstantial horrors, Lady Fairford became progressively conscious of a thousand minor details of guilt and folly. She saw that, like Pharaoh of old, her heart had been hardened; and trembled lest it should be too late to remedy the mischiefs occasioned by its evil influence.

Her reflections ended,—and the tears which attended their progress were bitter with remorse,—the Countess saw that an act of atonement was required at her hands. Hastily seizing a pen, she was about to address a letter to Miss Cunynghame setting forth her eagerness for a recon-

ciliation; but a letter would not half fulfil the warm impulses already swelling in her heart. She determined to "arise and go to her,"—to humble herself before the child she had injured, and repair her neglect of Lady Gertrude by redoubled tenderness towards her surviving daughters. She gave herself no leisure to grow cold in her repentance. Ere her pride could incase her once more in its iron panoply, she was at Mrs. Macfarlane's door, claiming admittance to the grand-daughter she longed to fold to her repentant heart.

Fortunately for Lady Fairford, she had to deal with generous spirits. Mrs. Macfarlane was too candid a person not to give ready credence to the Dowager's asseverations that till that hour she had been unaware of her young relative's residence in England; while Lady Fairford, on learning from Gertrude that her parents, alarmed lest she should share the destinies of their unfortunate son whom she resembled in person and constitution, had consigned her to the care of Mr. Cunynghame's family shortly after her brother's decease, strove to persuade herself that her own absence from England had prevented so important a charge from being delegated to herself. The estates of Glenwhelan, it appeared, adjoined those of Lord Inverarie; but Captain Dalrymple, in bestowing his affections on the lovely niece of his neighbour, Mrs. Macfarlane, entertained no suspicion that she was grandchild to the man whose infancy had been robbed of a mother's protection by the vices of his own grandfather.

It was the fatal denunciation pronounced by the Admiral on being apprized of the fact, which so far aggravated Lady Dalrymple's indisposition, as to determine the family to remove to a milder climate. It was the notorious antipathy cherished by the Maitlands against the Countess of Fairford, (whom the impetuous Claudius naturally detested as the originator of his misfortunes) which induced him to pass so much time in their society. His sisters, mean while, were doing their utmost to sooth those virulent resentments which for the first time rendered their father partial and unjust: and the representations made by Lady Napier and her sister, that Gertrude had been educated by a good and prudent mother, and had never been so much as admitted to the presence of the worldly-wise Dowager, at length so wrought upon his mind, that he sanctioned Captain Dalrymple's visit to

England for the purpose of ascertaining whether a season in London had done nothing to undermine the attachment conceived on the romantic banks of the Clyde; and whether the future Lady Ormleen would concur in his desire that a year's probation should still tax the stability of their affection.

To such a concession, indeed, the good and amiable Gertrude Cunynghame willingly agreed; more particularly as the expected arrival of her father and sisters was about to afford a considerable accession of strength to her own counsels. But Lady Fairford had no patience to witness the slight thus thrown upon a grand-daughter whom, unknown, she had so warmly admired, and whom, on acquaintance, she already dearly loved. Conscious of her own errors, she saw that in *this* instance, Lord Dalrymple was not altogether blameless; and as the remote cause of his injustice, felt it her duty to hazard an appeal to his feelings. Yes!—after forty years' estrangement, she resolved to address the Claudius she had loved, and treated with such callous harshness; she resolved to address him as an aged woman may address an aged man about to render his account to a higher tribunal; and although

"it might some wonder move
How these together could have talked of love,"—

there was something solemn and affecting in the occasion of the act, and the feelings to which it gave rise. She spoke of herself as too penitent and of her grandchild as too innocent, to merit his animosity; and laying aside the dignity of the peeress and countess dowager, implored him as a Christian to refrain from prolonging the anxieties of two guiltless persons in retribution of her former wrongs.

During the painful suspense preceding the return of the courier from Naples, Lady Fairford could scarcely bear an hour's separation from her grand-daughter. There was something in Gertrude Cunynghame's mild, forgiving air—something in the holy tenderness with which she revered the memory of her mother, and dwelt upon Lady Gertrude's virtues,—which cut her to the soul. She did not hesitate to touch upon the chapter of Lady Fairford's unkindness; but her steadiness of principle,—her graceful

ease of address, so superior to the assumption of arrogance,—her prudence, so distinct from guile,—her sobriety of mind, so pure from prudery,—her piety, so free from fanaticism,—by degress produced a salutary influence over the mind of her grandmother. Gertrude had been trained in the school of Christian virtue, and the humility of her character was not the least of its merits; and by the time intelligence reached England of Lord Dalrymple's forgiveness of herself, and dying benediction on the matrimonial engagements of his son, Lady Fairford was convinced that the "awkward, ill-bred, colonial belle," was the most distinguished woman in London;—that the daughter of the obscure Herbert Cunynghame had "a price above rubies;"—and that she herself had lived too long "without God in the world."—

It was not till the arrival of the Cunynghame family in England, and the expiration of Lord Dalrymple's mourning that the nuptials took place; when the Dowager insisted on resigning Maitland Hill to her grand-daughter as an English residence. The last lingering spark of her pride shone in the splendour with which she insisted on celebrating a solemnity, destined to obliterate the hereditary feuds of the two families.

"I understand," said Sir Holofernes Rodomont to Lady Grampus, at whose table (without the slightest intention of proposing to either of her daughters) he occasionally found it convenient to dine, "I understand that the Dowager has conducted herself, upon this occasion, with great spirit and magnanimity. The affectation of keeping up family dissensions is, in point of fact, a prejudice unworthy a century where the universal diffusion of *nullidge*——"

"Pho, pho!" cried Lord Grampus, who was equally irritated by his disappointment with respect to the lake-trout and moor-game,—and the prospect of being burdened with two full-grown daughters-in-law, to whom it was necessary to concede the liver-wings of the chickens, and the middle slice of the pine-apple,—"where could Captain Dalrymple find such another match as the heiress of a peerage and park with such venison as that of Maitland Hill?—Why, bless my soul, sir!—the Dalrymples have an income that would enable them to make either Ude or Carême their own!—Think of a dish of those Clydesdale troutlings, dressed *a la Genevoise*, or *au gra-*

tin!" he exclaimed, his mouth watering and his heart softening at the idea. "I should like to hear a man talk of hereditary feuds, indeed, with such a prospect before him!"

Floriana and Eliza sneered!—But neither sneers nor envy could reach the prosperous destinies of the bride and bridegroom;—and Lady Fairford, in her reconciliation with the happy family of the Cunynghames,—in the enjoyment of a green old age,—an adoption of habits of usefulness,—and a tardy but strenuous fulfilment of the duties of her station, was often tempted to acknowledge that, with all her aristocratic pride, and hollow vanity, she gloried in the lesson she had taken from the virtues of—HER GRAND-DAUGHTER!

THE

FLIRT OF TEN SEASONS.

How many pictures of one nymph we view,
All how unlike each other,—all how true!

POPE.

CHAPTER I.

Fashion, bon ton, and virtù, are the names of certain idols to which we sacrifice the genuine pleasures of the soul. We are content with personating happiness; to feel it is an art beyond us.

MACKENZIE.

TILL five years old, Adela Richmond was the beautiful plaything of her fine lady mother, the fashionable wife of Lord Germaine; from five to ten, the troublesome incumbrance of the fashionable widow of Lord Germaine; from ten to fifteen, she was seen by glimpses in places of public resort, adored as the queen of every juvenile ball-room, and already an object of calculation to Lord Germaine's dowager; and from fifteen to twenty, five-and-twenty, thirty, we intend that her charms and capacities shall be more amply depicted for the amusement of the reader.

In marking by lustres the progress of our heroine through the various vicissitudes of childhood, girlhood, and womanhood, we do not purpose to neglect those minor shades and gradations which intervene from year to year—from day to day—nay, hour to hour—in the picture of life; but it is necessary to establish the framework of the canvas from that happy epoch of Adela's existence, which saw the harness of the governess laid aside, the Italian grammar exchanged for the Court Guide, the muslin frock expanded into the brocaded train, the flaxen ringlets raised from her shoulders and braided into a Grecian contour. Lady Germaine had resolved that her daughter should remain a child till she was almost a woman; and, now, by a transforming touch of the wand of fashion, chose that she should be-

come a woman, though almost a child. From the hour she was presented at court, Adela found it decreed that her laugh should subside into a smile—her natural demeanour into a graceful glide—her playful frankness into a courteous discretion. It took her full a week to make her own acquaintance after the singular metamorphosis effected by Lady Germaine's interposition.

The "MUSTS" and "must *nots*" of her ladyship's tables of the law would have filled a volume; and though Adela had little difficulty in submitting to a transformation dependent rather on the art of the staymaker, shoemaker, mantuamaker, milliner, and hair-dresser, than on her own exertions, it certainly imposed a tax on her memory and her patience, when she found how many and how much she was to forget to remember, and remember to forget.

First, in the schedule attached to the commandment respecting oblivion of persons, stood the names of a family of cousins; children to a sister of Lord Germaine, who had *married imprudently*. Marrying imprudently implied, of course, according to the interpretation of the Germainic code, marrying for love instead of money—for good qualities instead of good estates;—and when poor Mr. Raymond died the death of a man of low fortunes and high blood, (a victim to the pestilential climate of a colony maintained by the wise policy of government, for the purpose of enabling the aristocracy to get rid of their younger sons without any necessity for a coroner's inquest,) his honourable widow, looking down on the heads of the six little orphans whom the yellow-fever had barbarously spared, might possibly be induced to admit the accuracy of the definition. Many trite proverbs were quoted for her consolation. She was reminded that large families always get on best in the world, and told that "Providence feedeth the young ravens;" while Lady Germaine, her sister-in-law, never failed to remark in her presence upon the multitude, complication, and fatality of the diseases of childhood.

Strange to relate, however, these little "ravens,"—these little Raymonds,—grew to be full-fledged birds, and to flutter round the parent-nest without any diminution of the covey by the attacks of measles, scarlati-

na, or whooping-cough. While divers of their aristocratic kindred spindled up into consumptions, *they* remained tough, rough, and compact; and while their little cousin, Lord Germaine was crammed into a liver complaint, *their* homely cheeks became red as roses, *their* laughing eyes bright with the impulses of health. Lady Germaine was once heard angrily to declare, on quitting Mrs. Raymond's modest residence at Fulham, that "she did really believe nothing would ever *provide* for one of those Raymond boys;—that even if Harry were to get his father's appointment in the West Indies, he would live for ever. Poor Mrs. Raymond was very much to be pitied; but then what could she expect in making such a connexion!"

Not to be left a widow at eight and twenty!—or she would probably have welcomed with less delight the birth of Henry, Charles, and William, Mary,—Margaret, and Jane;—for, with all her motherly tenderness and self-denial, she found it a difficult task to maintain the appearance due to her connexion with the peerage, or satisfy her own fond wishes for her children. Her noble brother was dead, and the present Lord Germaine (his nephew and her own) a minor, unable to come forward to her assistance. Adela's richly jointured mother occasionally favoured her with a very long note of advice, and a very small note payable at sight; and had it not been for the tender mercies of a college friend of her husband, who got her second boy entered at Woolwich, and the generosity of a distant relative, a Sir Richard Raymond, in placing Henry at school and promising him a commission in the Guards, she might have been forced, on her children's behalf, to unite herself with a certain old, ugly, fantastic Mr. Orme, who was extremely anxious to marry the indigent family. But she had now only little William at home, for whom she had been already compelled to accept the painful provision of a writership in India. And as to Mary, Margaret, and Jane, the maintenance of girls, especially if good, simple, and well-principled girls, such as poor Raymond's orphans, entails no very alarming expenditure.

But it was not little William, it was neither Mary, Margaret, nor Jane, whom the beautiful Adela dis-

covered still adhering to her remembrance, in spite of Lady Germaine's repeated admonition of, "Now you are out, my love, it will not do for you to have any thing to say to those Raymonds."—It was Henry, "my cousin Harry!"—to whom she had always found a prodigious deal to say; and whose replies to her sayings had heretofore been inextricably entangled in her memory with the rules of the Italian grammar, and the ethics of Mademoiselle Meringue.

During her father's lifetime, Henry Raymond, who was his godson, resided in his uncle's family; but no sooner did Lady Germaine find herself in possession of her liberty and a jointure of two thousand per annum, than she despatched a pathetic letter to Mrs. Raymond, full of lamentation over her own unfortunate change of circumstances, and the necessity it involved of separating the children; and Harry, in the little fancy hussar-jacket she had not judged it necessary to exchange for mourning for her lord his uncle, was dismissed on the spot, to encroach upon the limited roast mutton and rice pudding of his brothers and sisters. It is true Lady Germaine never looked upon her deceased husband's banished favourite, after she had turned him out of her house, without expressing an aunt-like hope that he would always consider it his home, and Adela as his sister; more particularly when Sir Richard Raymond undertook the cost of his education, and the care of his advancement. But on discovering that the said Sir Richard was a married man with a son of his own, and that he proposed nothing better for his young relative than a pair of colours in the foot-guards, she issued an ukase purporting that Henry Raymond and Adela were once more to become brother and sister. This indeed was the only safe mode of connexion between them; for it must be owned that Harry's personal appearance did ample honour to the young-raven mode of nourishment. When he first appeared in uniform in St. James's Street, even the hackney-coachmen frequenting that regal purlieu, decreed that nothing in the three regiments could match with the new ensign.

At that period, Adela was allowed to think so and say so too; for she was then "not out,"—very far from out—only thirteen; already, however, a miniature beau-

ty,—an embryo coquette; and already the idol of Henry Raymond's heart. He could always manage to perceive half a mile off, Lady Germaine's carriage dowagering in January towards the Serpentine to look at the skaiters, so as to be in time to astonish his pretty little cousin with his most elaborate evolutions. Whenever Adela was smuggled from the school-room to the Opera for a single night to take a lesson from Pasta's cadences, he failed not to detect the lustre of her bright flaxen curls the moment she entered the house. He chose to fancy himself still a boy, that he might be admitted to the youthful entertainments of the season; and would gladly have personified even an old woman to obtain admittance to those morning mysteries of Wills's rooms, whereby the incipient belle's of patrician lineage are initiated into their still more occult midnight revels. He had no misgivings, no anxieties on the subject; Lady Germaine was as kind to him, Adela as fond of him as ever;—nor was it till the very day of his cousin's presentation,—when, on observing her blushing and beautiful face through the window of her mother's new chariot, he flew to offer his hand as she stepped from the carriage—that he found himself encroaching in a troublesome manner on her train—that his assistance was wanted by mamma,—that *she* could take care of herself. But though he observed all this, and even a degree of coldness in the altered eye of the debutante, he did not *find*,—he did not infer—he could not dream, that he was indebted for the exhibition of such vagaries to Lady Germaine's commands that Adela would have "nothing farther to say to those Raymonds."

Now Sir Richard, in extending the generosity of his honest heart towards one of the orphans of his distant kinsman, had not acted with the precipitancy of those who promise more on impulse than they are inclined to perform on deliberation; and in the apprehension that his son might hereafter feel inclined to diminish the measure of his munificence, he had judged it necessary to place in the hands of trustees, for the exclusive benefit of his protegée, a sum of five thousand pounds. The income of two hundred a-year, thus secured to Henry Raymond in addition to his pay, was however diminished by one half, (precisely in accordance with

his benefactor's calculation) to increase the pittance of his mother and sisters; and many a cold and rainy night did Harry trudge home to his lodgings from those places of gay resort to which he was tempted by the hope of obtaining a glimpse of his beautiful cousin; and many a time pass repiningly the doors of the Opera, where he knew that Adela's beauty was attracting the gaze of hundreds, lest he should trespass upon the little hoard he delighted to lay aside for his sister Margaret's annual expedition to the coast.

It must be owned that Margaret was Henry's favourite of the three sisters; his favourite because she most needed favour. If less beautiful than Mary, less pretty than little Jane, she was frailer, gentler, less self-relying than either. Her delicate health demanded more fostering than falls to the lot of one of six unportioned orphans; her delicate mind more consideration than is apt to be bestowed by the mother of a large family on the least useful member of the little community. But Harry was her decided champion; would make any sacrifice for the augmentation of her scanty stock of comforts, and exert all his eloquence with his brothers and sisters to render them equally forbearing. Margaret had no means of rewarding all this kindness, but by loving him intensely, and listening patiently to all his details of Adela Richmond's attractions, and the admiration lavished upon their fair cousin whenever she made her appearance in the world;—to his lamentations over his own want of fortune, and Lady Germaine's want of magnanimity. It seemed still more extraordinary to Margaret than to himself, that their cousin should hesitate to frown on all mankind for the sake of her devoted adorer; or that the dowager should be blind to the eligibility of keeping her daughter single for the chance of Harry's becoming a field-officer with a private fortune of an encumbered two hundred per annum.

That she did so close her eyes, soon became apparent to the young ensign. Harry found himself promoted to new dignities without any war-office advertisement in the Gazette. He now became *Mister* Raymond with his aunt and Adela; and instead of the smile and blush with which his assiduities were formerly repulsed by the little coquette, they were listlessly and almost un-

consciously accepted by the fine lady. The Hon. Miss Richmond could not condescend to be rude, but she alienated him from her side by the utmost impertinence of fashionable languor; seemed incapable of exerting herself to return his bow, to answer his inquiry; and yawned her way through the dance, in which the forms of society forbade her to refuse him her hand, unless with the penalty of sitting still for the remainder of the evening. All this was done in a manner his quick spirit could not but resent. Adela's calculations were fully answered that Henry would soon desist from seeking her as a partner; but then it was no fault of hers:—Lady Germaine had ordained that she was to have "nothing more to say to those Raymonds."

On his next visit to the cheerful cottage at Fulham, which the activity of his mother and the natural refinement of his sister Margaret rendered so charming a retreat, Henry found it difficult to answer their numberless interrogations touching the success of their cousin Adela's debut. Mary, her rival in beauty, had a thousand investigations to make concerning Miss Richmond's dress, her style, her position in society; Margaret was only anxious to learn whether the world had wrought no evil in her,—whether her smiles were still as affectionate for "my cousin Harry," as they were enchanting to all the other Harries of the metropolis; while Jane cared only for the list of her conquests, and the amount of peers she had already reduced to desperation.

Henry contrived to give as satisfactory a reply to all these questions as he could, without implicating the haughty beauty by an unqualified statement of her proceedings. For himself, he had only one anxiety on the subject:—was Adela happy, or likely to remain so?—Alas, he feared not!

CHAPTER II.

Shall I paint Aurelia's frown?
Her proud and regal looks,—her quick black eye
Through whose dark fringes such a beam shot down
On men (yet touched at times with witchery)
As when Jove's planet, distant and alone,
Flashes from out the sultry summer sky.

PROCTER.

Sir Richard Raymond and his wife (for according to the custom of the good old times they composed a single animal, and therefore need not be severally considered by the biographer) were of high respectability in their native county of Dorset,—of utter nothingness among the Stars and Garters of the metropolis. They had commenced life together by an early marriage, as a baronet and dame of tolerable pedigree with a clear ten thousand per annum; and at the expiration of forty years stood pretty nearly on the spot from whence they started. Kind-hearted, simple, affectionate, bountiful to their poorer neighbours, living and letting live with those of higher degree,—they were cordial and reverent with an old dunny Vicar who half-starved a deserving curate,—by way of testifying their respect to the Church; and evinced unlimited submission and regard towards their colossal neighbour the Duke of Dronington, who bullied his wife and his tenants, and sneaked to his sovereign and his sovereign's minister,—by way of proving their reverence to the state. They intended well, however, and therefore seldom acted ill; they had a warm heart, which was sure to prevent the head from disgracing itself.

It is wrong to assert that *nothing* was changed at Langdale House from the period of Sir Richard's marriage and first session in parliament, to that of the commencement of our story. He was now a father:—not like his luckless cousin, of six hungry and promising children, but of one sleek, self-satisfied, middle-aged

man, whom Sir Richard and her ladyship alone regarded relatively to his position as *their* son. To all the rest of the world he was "Burford Raymond;" a man with a name—with a seat in the house—chambers in Albany—a position in society;—a being as much above the level of his country baronet of a father, in all the adventitious distinctions of life, as he was beneath him in every moral purpose, in all the best qualities of human nature.

But though Sir Richard and Lady Raymond continually referred to him with pride and pleasure as "my son Mr. Raymond," certain it is that they were full of wonder at having hatched so wise a bird; and regarded him with somewhat more of awe than of parental tenderness. Perhaps, after all, the miracle was one of education; for scarcely had Master Raymond begun to trot round the hall at Langdale on his father's walking-stick, when their neighbour of Dronington, a man singularly addicted to the theoretical and practical maintenance of absolute monarchy, took it into his ducal head to investigate Sir Richard's projects of education for his heir apparent: to suggest a Reverend Nicodemus Fagg, M. A., as his private tutor, and to insist upon the paramount necessity of classical proficiency to every English gentleman of modern times. "An English gentleman" is one of those cant phrases of the day which are introduced on all occasions to fill up deficiencies of personal definition.—Poor Sir Richard had always fancied *himself* "an English gentleman" when, on a distant glimpse of his broad-brimmed hat and white corduroys in the High Street of his county-town, every head was uncovered, and

> All men cried, 'God save him!'

or when feasting his tenantry on rent-days, Christmas days, and other highdays and holidays; or, when complimented from the Treasury bench on his luminous exposition of the state of public opinion in his native county. He now found he had been mistaken. How could it be otherwise, when his very good friend the Duke of Dronington said so, or so implied?—He resolved that Master Burford should have plenty of Ho-

race and Pindar drummed into his head to compensate his father's deficiencies, and qualify the future proprietor of Langdale to become "an English gentleman!"

Nicodemus Fagg was accordingly installed in his functions at Langdale House, and certainly spared neither Greek nor Latin on his pupil. Burford, who was always a grave heavy child, became a solemn plausible boy, a pedantic man; and his pains-taking tutor,—while he laboriously fulfilled the intention of the Duke of Dronington, by teaching young Raymond's political ideas to shoot as exactly in accordance with those of his Grace as if every twig had been nailed up over the old Gothic gateway of Dronington Manor,—fancied himself repaying Sir Richard's liberal salary by obtaining for his son the highest honours of Eton and the University. Burford Raymond was the first man of his year, and, between ourselves and the reader, one of the coldest dullest egotists who ever detected a false concord, or prosed over the intricacies of Greek prosody.

It is not to be imagined that so complete a prodigy of erudition would content himself with Squire-ifying for life at Langdale House; listening to his mother's rheumatic grievances, or carving venison for the corporation of * * * * *—after an obscure season passed in the metropolis, where his personal insignificancy afforded a lesson more afflicting than profitable, he persuaded the good old Baronet that it was indispensable for "an English gentleman" to travel; and as no family living was just then vacant to recompense the exertions of Nicodemus, the dominie considerately agreed to become the post-chaise companion of his quondam pupil. Most young men of twenty-four would have voted the society of a pedagogue superfluous in such an exigency. But Burford Raymond entertained no projects of amusement in which the presence of the divine was likely to prove embarrassing. He had no thoughts of visiting Paris; no curiosity respecting Berlin, Vienna, Florence, or Naples; but was earnestly bent on a pilgrimage to

> The spot where Troy once stood, and nothing stands;

and eager to examine into the rites and relics of my-

thological idolatry in the Archipelago. He cared nothing for Mont Blanc or Vesuvius, the Louvre or the Vatican: but his ambition was roused to ascertain whether Lacedemonian broth is still eaten black in Misitra.

From these erudite researches, Burford Raymond, like other monkeys who see the world, returned with a solemn physiognomy, a vocabulary of polysyllabic words, a collection of well-turned phrases, and the coterie-reputation of being one of the most learned men in Europe. He became an F. S. A. an F. R. S. and every other sort of fellow excepting always a good fellow;—still priding himself on being "an English gentleman, though whether he possessed the generous and honourable sentiments characteristic of that distinction, or had added one iota to the stock of human knowledge such as might entitle him to the alphabetical honours attached to his patronymic, is highly problematical. He became, however, on the strength of his classical travels, a dining-out lion; and executed several bon-mots which were accepted as stock pieces in the repertory of the clubs. A well-sounding name, and the two thousand per annum allowed by his father, afforded a creditable footing in society; and in the course of twelve years wholly and solely devoted to the task, he contrived to establish his reputation as a most accomplished scholar, a "man of wit and fashion about town." He lived indeed in a small but very select circle, wherein his sayings were pre-assured of applause; and his doings, minute as they were, ran no chance of being brought to shame by the lofty deeds of his competitors. In a word, he was now, "Burford Raymond;" a man to quote—a personage; nor would any human being have presumed to suspect his affinity to the Dorsetshire baronet, with the broad-brimmed beaver and hunting cords.

But with all the admiration entertained by Sir Richard for his illustrious son, it would seem that he was apt to regard the learned Pundit as better versed in Pausanius or Euripides, than in Coke, Blackstone, or Burn's Justice;—seldom consulting the sage of Albany respecting his family affairs, and never in those where worldly wisdom was to merge in active liberality. Sir

Richard undertook, for instance, the maintenance of little Henry without one word of reference to the dining-out dictator; and was in the habit of inviting the young and lovely Mary Raymond to pass the summer at Langdale, without the slightest regard to Burford's displeasure on observing such an addition to their family circle.

Perhaps, the groper of antiquities might have been less disposed to opposition on the subject, had he not found reason to suspect that one of the motives of his parents in placing their fair relative so determinately in his way, was to suggest a future ladyship for Langdale House. But Burford was not the man to receive suggestions. He thought it necessary to mark his sense of Sir Richard and Lady Raymond's presumption, by demeaning himself towards Mary with as much supercilious respect as if she had been queen of the Sandwich Islands: while Miss Raymond, too little versed in the airs of London coterieism to apprehend the meaning of the solemn coxcomb, looked upon him in return, as a very curious specimen of a class of animals quite new to her; and on many occasions perplexed his dignity by the naîveté and pertinacity of her questions respecting the manners and customs of *his* section of society.

It was peculiarly disgusting to Burford Raymond when these indiscretions of speech chanced to occur in the presence of the Duchess of Dronington, and her daughter, Lady Caroline Ilderfield. What opinions would *they* form of his connexions, on learning that he had a family of cousins living at Fulham, who knew not where Almacks was situated, nor whether it were the name of a man, house, street, or square; and that one of them, moreover, was so deficient in tact, as to amend her ignorance by public inquiries on the subject. But Mary Raymond was incorrigible; Lady Caroline had frequently put up her glass at her, without abashing her into nothingness!. while the Duchess had twice called her "that young person," without rendering her at all conscious of her own insignificance.

Nor was this the worst aspect of the affair. Another member of the Ilderfield family, now began to amuse himself with raising a glass to Miss Raymond's beauti-

ful face and sparkling eyes. The young Marquis of Stoneham—a very ladylike young man just returned from the continent—had openly avowed his opinion that she was the prettiest girl in the county, and marked his intention of honouring her with his patronage; on which hint Burford, instead of courting the chance of getting rid of the intruder from Langdale by making her a Marchioness, became more shocked than ever by her presumption in effecting such a conquest! Mary Raymond,—a poor relation,—a girl who thought herself fortunate when Sir Richard put a ten pound note into her hand to buy her a new dress;—*she* to aspire to the honours of Dronington Manor?—Monstrous!—Burford was nearly as much distressed as their Graces, the Droningtons themselves! The Duke, indeed, commenced, on this occasion, an attack upon the persuadeability of Sir Richard, almost as direct as that he had formerly practised in favour of Nicodemus Fagg. He rode over to Langdale, and entertained his worthy neighbour a full hour tête-à-tête in the library, with the avowal of his uneasiness lest "that showy-looking girl whom Lady Raymond chose to keep about her should attract the attention of his young friend, Mr. Burford Raymond. Marriages between cousins were such bad things—such *very dangerous* things:—no extension of the family connexion,—no cross in the race! He ventured strongly to recommend his dear Sir Richard to despatch Miss Raymond back to her friends."

But his dear Sir Richard was as inflexible on this point as he had been on that of assuring a provision to little Harry. "Miss Raymond was with her friends—was engaged to pass the winter and spring at Langdale. He was not ambitious of an extension of his connexion; not solicitous about a cross in the race; not alarmed on Burford's account;—his son might marry Mary as soon as he pleased."

Unfortunately, old Dronington was perfectly well aware that he did *not* please; that all her charms and captivations were and would remain at the service of his own son, Lord Stoneham. He had long felt a distaste towards the family at Langdale on account of Burford's pretensions to the hand of his daughter; and this second instance of Raymond ambition almost over-

powered him. The Duke had some consolation in knowing that he had nothing to apprehend from Lady Caroline's favourable reception of the suit of the son; but he saw no means of evading Stoneham's perverse predilection for the poor relation. Even were his Grace to quit Dronington with his family and pass the winter at one of his seven other seats, it would be impossible to control the movements of a full-grown puppy, or impose the authority of a bear-leader or head-nurse, upon a young gentleman, who had already officiated as one of the junior lords of His Majesty's Treasury. All that could be done by his desponding parents in his defence, was to fill Dronington Manor with groups of young ladies as pretty and witty, but better born and better bred than this hundred and nineteenth cousin of a Dorsetshire Baronet. They could not, indeed, (while such a thing as electioneering interests remained to be considered,) entirely exclude the Raymonds from a participation in the gaieties which were the result of these importations, nor refuse a formal dinner-party at Langdale House in return; but they resolved to crush both Mary and her pompous cousin into absolute annihilation by the mere force of contrast,—the mere superiority of fashion.

CHAPTER III.

He sets out his feathers like an owl, to swell and seem bigger than he is: he is troubled with a tumour and inflammation of self-conceit, that render him stiff and uneasy. BUTLER.

LANGDALE HOUSE was a mansion of the old cast; square, solid, respectable and hideous. It was situated in a fine park, but so completely on the verge of the estate as to invalidate the benefit of its fine woods and majestic stream; and with a thousand noble situations begging to be built upon, chose to stand on the very verge of a solitary unsheltered hill, apparently requiring a prop to maintain it on its unstable footing. Notwithstanding its extent and dignity of proportion, the red brick of which the house was composed, contrasting with the plantations of firs and Weymouth pines which the present baronet had tried to coax into growth, to disguise its nakedness, gave it a trivial and vulgar appearance. Lord Stoneham and his St. James's Street friends called it "*Le Chateau de Rouge et Noir.*"

The interior of the mansion was precisely accordant with its external promise. It was cold, rectangular, roomy, and comfortless; and Mary, who was adjudged by her cousin so unnecessarily fortunate in being translated from the cottage at Fulham, to the higher see of Langdale, was apt to fancy that her mother's cheerful abode, with all its little modernisms, the gifts of her son or the results of the industry of her daughters, was a far pleasanter place than the vast "parlour" in which Lady Raymond, her pug and her worsted-work, took their station morning after morning, amid hard high-backed mahogany chairs, and black narrow refulgent mahogony tables—sans books, sans flowers, sans taste,

sans every thing; two newspapers, (the Dorchester Evening and metropolitan Morning Chronicle,) alone connecting the scene with the passing day. The baronet was, in fact, a holy hater of innovation; he had no notion why the library chair, which had been sufficiently commodious for his father, Sir Henry, should be too hard for himself, Sir Richard; and if Rachel, third Lady Raymond, had contented herself with a square board by way of dressing-table, he considered it absurd to extend the fantastical improvements of modern art to Lady Raymond the sixth. He was no frequenter of shops, no coveter of superfluous moveables; and with the exception of Burford Raymond's sealed apartments, which he had rendered a fac simile of his chambers in the Albany, there was not a room in the house but threatened martyrdom to a lounger.

The Baronet was in fact one of those unaspiring persons who are content to live within the limits of their income, without grasping at all the enjoyments, or affecting all the follies, created by the opulence of a wealthier class. But it is evident that penuriousness was not the origin of his predilection for his threadbare fustian curtains and chain-stitch chairs. A niggardly man would not have set apart a provision for an orphan kinsman, nor thrown a portionless beauty in the way of his heir apparent. Perhaps he was not a lover of luxury;—perhaps the gratification of an easy conscience was in his opinion a better promoter of a comfortable doze, than that of an easy chair or eider-down mattress.

Nothing could be more diverting than the air of discomfort with which the Duchess of Dronington sat mounted on the state sofa, and Lady Caroline on a high-arched satin fauteuil, on occasion of those annual dinners at Langdale House which brought them into melancholy contact with their contemptible neighbours Lord and Lady Soho (who had just crept into the peerage with their half dozen Honourable Misters and Misses Compton;) their *more* contemptible neighbours Mr. and Mrs. and the two Miss Dechiminis; and their *most* contemptible neighbours the dunny Vicar Dr. Docket, and the injured curate Mr. Rubric.

From these parties, (a tribute from the maternal ten-

derness of the Duchess of Dronington to her son's parliamentary career) Burford Raymond contrived to absent himself; for they usually occurred in the month of October, when he went pheasant-shooting to his mother's Norfolk estates. He had scarcely courage to see Lady Caroline Ilderfield's sneering eye making a catalogue of that "ancient most domestic furniture" he was so anxious to convert into the goods and chattels of her own jointure-house; and never did the Duke and Duchess of Dronington set foot in Langdale House, but he felt heartily ashamed of his old-fashioned father and mother, their old-fashioned saloon, and old-fashioned modes of hospitality.

By some ill-timed arrangement on the part of Sir Richard, on occasion of Mary's last and wonder-working visit, his son was on the spot to do the honours of the hecatomb offered up to their Graces of Dronington; and bitter indeed was his vexation on observing throughout its tedious courses, the piteous expression of weariness and *malaise* visible in the party. He, whose field of triumph was the field of the cloth of damask, whose victorious course was that second course of a dinner party which is as favourable to the sayers as to the eaters of good things,—he, Burford Raymond, learned to hail with delight the awful moment when butlers announce the illumination of the drawing-room; when gloves and handkerchiefs are assiduously scrambled for under the table, till many a plethoric gentleman assumes the complexion of a turkey-cock;—when young ladies scud like a flight of lapwings in all the delicate embarrassment of undecided precedence, while the dowagers rustle from the room like seventy-four and three-deckers leading a fleet out of harbour.

Burford Raymond noted with disgust the admiring glances cast by the young Marquis at Mary as she glided past his chair; but it would have called forth still deeper indignation had he known the easy self-possession with which soon afterwards she sat conversing with his lordship's haughty sister, in the room which Lady Raymond thought proper to nominate her boudoir. The fault was Lady Caroline's; who, with all her contempt for Miss Raymond's ringlets and fashionless air, found her a degree more endurable than the Comptons

and Dechiminis, whom she could not honour by a similar familiarity without the chance of finding her acquaintance claimed by them in London. Having led the way to the little sanctum whither she knew their companions would not presume to follow uninvited, she screwed herself up with a most repining countenance into one of the great carved settees; and gave vent to her impertinence by tormenting Mary with a thousand questions, without listening for the reply, and with a thousand details in reply to questions which Mary had never asked.

"You have a brother in the Guards, I think, Miss Raymond?—I often meet him at Almacks, and the sort of public places where one meets every body."

"On the contrary, my brother never—"

"Exactly!—Very tall, with red hair. He would be a very good waltzer if he had the least idea of time, but—"

"I assure you that Henry—"

"They would have it last season that he was going to be married to Lady Gertrude Mildhurst; but I have very good reason to suppose he was only flirting with her married sister; and—"

"You are quite mistaken in—"

"Ah!—well—I dare say I was wrong. Lady Gertrude is a very pretty girl; and though by no means in a good set, and too English in her tone, she is tolerably popular, independent of the attraction of those fifty thousand pounds, which Mr. Raymond,—Captain Raymond—Captain, is he?—found so irresistible?"

"Believe me, Lady Caroline—"

"No! I really never trust to sisterly exculpations. Adela Richmond and I settled one night at Lansdowne House—"

"Adela!—then you know—"

"Very true!—I see you agree with us that a younger brother is just as excusable in attaching himself to an heiress, as a younger sister to an elder son. Adela declares that the very notion of being a Mrs. Henry, or a Mrs. Charles, would drive her to distraction."

"Drive her to distraction!" retorted Mary; "my cousin Adela's proceedings—"

"Your cousin?"—cried Lady Caroline, now really

anxious for a reply. "*Is* Adela a cousin of yours, and of all these Langdale people?—I never should have guessed it."

"Not of all these Langdale people,—if you mean—"

"Sir Richard and her ladyship, and their learned son?"

"Adela Richmond is my mother's niece; the Raymonds are relations on my father's side.

"Ah! very true. I remember hearing her say that it was the destiny of the last generation of Miss Raymonds to marry in some unfortunate way or other; and that *she* had made up her mind to amend the matrimonial destinies of the Germaine family.

"I hope she may fulfil her intentions," observed Mary in a tone of pique. "And yet—"

"She has every chance that beauty and fashion can give," said Lady Caroline, sneeringly. "One of my younger brothers took it into his head to fall desperately in love with her as soon as she came out; and mamma was seriously uneasy about it. But I pacified her by the assurance, that so long as an heir apparent was to be had in London, Horace ran no danger; and, just as I predicted, she refused him at the end of the season, in company with half a dozen other despairing swains, not one of whom filled up the measure of her ambition."

"Not one of whom had managed to engage her affections, I conclude," added Mary, gravely.

"I rather fancy Adela has no affections to engage," observed the impartial Lady Caroline. Either her heart was already gone, or she was born without one."

"I will answer for it that she *had* one, and a very warm one too, when we were all children together.—But Lady Germaine is a very worldly woman; and, perhaps, may have rendered Adela as calculating as herself."

"Perhaps so; it remains to be proved whether they calculate wisely. They seem to forget that human life is precarious; and that when Lady Germaine's jointure goes, Adela will only have her pretty face and a few thousand pounds to push her on in the world. An only child and without any opulent connexions, what on earth would become of her in the event of her mother's death?"

"Poor girl!" said Mary, shuddering at any allusion to the death of a mother.

"And yet she has been rash enough to refuse Mr. Bronze,—that great huge vulgar man with a Yorkshire estate as large as himself; and Sir Hector Mackenzie, who brought back that noble fortune last year from Calcutta!"

"Indeed!—then after all," said Mary, secretly reverting to the girl and boy attachment between Adela and her brother Harry, "my cousin may not be so heartless as I thought; after all she may prove herself superior to the temptations of a mercenary match."

"Heartless?—Why what do you imagine to have been her inducement in rejecting Sir Hector and Bronze?—Affection for my brother Horace, or some other chivalrous knight with the horrors of a small competence to allure her to St. George's Church?—No, no! my dear Miss Raymond,—I cannot believe that so much unsophistication of mind exists even at Langdale.—"

"What *could* have been her motive?" inquired Mary.

"Her mother's, you mean;—for my friend Adela had little voice in the business. Why of course to form a better connexion. Lady Germaine has been manœuvring to get Stoneham to her house all the spring;—and young Lord Westerham appeared really struck by Adela's beauty;—and Colonel Rawford, Lord Rawford's eldest son, is always dangling after her. In short, she is the fashion;—and Lady Germaine fancies she may marry whom she pleases. But both mother and daughter may find themselves mistaken. Marrying and flirting are too very different modes of amusement."

"Marrying and flirting are too very different modes of amusement!" exclaimed young Dechimini, with most provoking mimicry, having entered the boudoir on tip-toe without the smallest deference to the dignity of the two young ladies. "Raymond!—will you believe that Lady Caroline has actually decoyed your fair cousin into this lonely chamber to impart a lesson in fashionable ethics."

Burford was furious that a Mr. Dechimini, an undistinguished individual with a plebeian name, should presume to "Raymond" *him*, or degrade Lady Caroline Ilderfield to the level of his cousin Mary.

"Remington, my dear fellow!" cried Mr. Dechimini to Lord Soho's eldest son, who now entered the boudoir, (a young man who, in spite of his connexion with a new peerage, was looked up to as one of the most eminent of the rising generation,—whose society was welcomed by the gray-beards of law and literature, as eagerly as by the men of his own standing) "Remington, do pray come and try your eloquence in persuading Lady Caroline to extend her course of lectures. For my part, I am dying to learn in what sort and degree the amusements of flirting and wedlock are incompatible; or by what lapse of discretion Miss Raymond has subjected herself to the homily."

"Will you join the Duchess?"—said Burford Raymond in a low tone to Lady Caroline, offering her his arm to conduct her into the other room; and too indignant to remonstrate with the son of a Dorsetshire squire, who presumed to apostrophize so familiarly the only daughter of the Duke of Dronington.

"Thank you," replied the young lady, who had no objection to flirt or be flirted with by the young Comptons when no better diversion was at her disposal, "I came here to avoid the unendurable heat of the other room."

"*Unendurable!* How completely a lady's word," cried Dechimini again; nothing daunted by the dry lofty disdain of the classical proficient.

"Your ladyship has nothing to apprehend from the atmosphere of the drawing-room," interposed Burford very stiffly; "the doors have been opened into the library."

"I wish the bookworm would profit by the circumstance, and betake himself to his proper latitude," whispered the young Squire to Remington Compton, who stood with his keen satirical eye fixed upon the mincing affectation of Lady Caroline, the solemn affectation of her admirer; and secretly pondering over the dulness and embarrassment which the presence of a single disagreeable or fastidious person spreads around him;—when a general murmur of satisfaction and gratulation was heard in the adjoining apartment. Sir Richard's voice rose to its highest pitch of exultation; Lord Soho's hand was heard inflicting a friendly slap

on the back of some new comer; Miss Compton smiled, —Lady Raymond's pug capered and frisked,—and Burford stood aghast while in the midst of it all— "Ay, ay! Harry will find his way to them without much prompting," uttered in the cordial voice of his father, announced to him the inopportune arrival of young Henry Raymond! In another minute the brother of Mary was among them; imprinting an affectionate kiss on her cheek, receiving a most gracious bow and smile from Lady Caroline, shaking hands cordially with Compton and Dechimini, and respectfully with the learned Albanyan himself; in his morning dress, redolent of the freshness of the external atmosphere, his hands and face glowing with the chill air through which he had been travelling (the monster!) on the top of a Dorchester coach.

Burford Raymond was scandalized beyond measure at the disclosure of such a circumstance in presence of the Dronington party. He could have annihilated the indelicate intruder on the spot; more particularly when Lady Caroline, instead of maintaining her usual air of languid apathy, brightened up to laugh and talk with the young Guardsman; of whom she had a thousand inquiries to make respecting their friend Lady Gertrude Mildhurst,—their friend This, their friend Lady That, Lord and above all, respecting his cousin Adela Richmond.

It was surprising how soon the formality of the party gave way before the influence of Henry's popular manners and cordial tone. Every body liked *him.* Even the dense old Duke had always fifty questions to put respecting his regiment, in which he had himself served when Marquis of Stoneham about the middle of the preceding century. The present feminine Lord of that name, whose absence from England had precluded any acquaintance with the protégé of his father's quizzy neighbour Sir Richard Raymond, advanced to beg Mary would present him to her brother; and Harry soon found himself carried off to a window, after the fashion of the Ilderfield set, to whisper away the remainder of the evening in the most unmeaning mystery, instead of being able to deliver to Sir Richard the newspapers, and letters, and parcels, and messages he had charged him-

self withal; or to her ladyship the product of the innumerable commissions he had executed at her bidding. It would have been long enough before Burford condescended to become postman to his old father, or light porter to his old mother!—no wonder he had the mortification of perceiving how much more welcome at Langdale was the arrival of his tall, frank, handsome, animated, good-humoured, genuine cousin,—than his own frigid, selfish, well-bred, supercilious *entree*. He could have forgiven them all except Lady Caroline Ilderfield:—but really she might have known better!

CHAPTER IV.

Should any novice in the rhyming trade
With lawless pen the realms of verse invade,
Forth from the court where sceptred sages sit—
Abused with praise and flattered into wit—
Legions of factious authors start.

CHURCHILL.

When Burford Raymond announced himself to be under the necessity of returning to town the day following the arrival of Harry at Langdale House, it never occurred to his kind-hearted old father and mother that jealousy of his young relative was the motive of this sudden journey; so little indeed, that Sir Richard actually presumed to inquire whether he could not remain another day or two, and take back Henry, who had only a week's leave of absence.

"It is my intention, sir, to go round by Newbury, and sleep at Lord Rawford's."

"So much the better!—I am sure my friend Rawford will be very glad to see the boy."

"It does not enter into my plan, sir, to impose the company of Mr. Henry Raymond, or that of any other member of his family, on the patience of those who only endure it from respect to ourselves."

"I fancy you will find," replied his father, somewhat tartly, "that very little of the respect due to ourselves is encroached upon for patience to bear the company of a fine, likely, manly fellow like Harry, or of a beautiful girl like Mary. Nature has given them a letter of introduction, that makes them welcome wherever they go."

Burford Raymond's departure was evidently a relief to every one at Langdale, even to the worthy old baronet and his wife; who, proud as they were of their only son, could not but perceive that he considered himself advanced a century before themselves in refinement and knowledge of the world, as well as a whole class above them in personal importance. Even the warm-hearted Henry, who involuntarily included every thing at Langdale in his gratitude to the founder of his fortunes, was painfully embarrassed by the awkwardness of his position relative to his ungracious kinsman; and as to Mary, however guarded on the subject in presence of Sir Richard and the old lady, she disguised neither from her brother nor herself, that Mr. Raymond was her physical and moral aversion.—He was so ugly, so hard, so coolly insolent!—What was his conventional reputation to *her?*—

One of the first objects of her first tête-à-tête with Henry, after due inquiries touching the health and happiness of the little dove's nest at Fulham, was to ascertain how much was to be held authentic of Lady Caroline Ilderfield's portrait of their cousin Adela; whether he had seen much of Lady Germaine,—and whether—but no! she had not courage to interrogate him concerning his feelings towards them both. Harry, mean while, was little inclined to trifle with her curiosity. No sooner had he given his bulletin of Margaret's winter-cough, and his opinion of the extraordinary development of Jane's musical talents, than he commenced, in a voice that did not tremble much—only a little in the beginning of the history—a narrative of Miss Richmond's conduct towards him; and it was with wonder and indignation that Mary heard how Adela had long since dismissed him to the footing of a common acquaintance; how much she had been admired and fol-

lowed during the season; and how eagerly both Lady Germaine and herself, had shown themselves for the increase of her followers and admirers.

"Lady Caroline's assertion then is true, that Adela has become a most decided flirt?"

"Quite true;—and she is still so beautiful!"

"And that she has been absolutely laying siege to the attentions of men who had shown no pretensions to her favour?"

"Exactly; but Adela is surrounded by willing votaries; by men who would lay down their lives for her!"

"And she will accept none of them?"

"Lady Germaine is the accepting party in these matters; and I can perceive that the sensation Adela has produced in society, has inflated her ambition beyond all bounds. That she should disregard *my* attachment to her daughter, and that which, I presume, to believe her daughter once entertained for *me*, I can forgive; perhaps, it was her maternal duty to act as she has done towards us. But several of Miss Richmond's new admirers are men of rank,—several of them men of fortune,—and—"

"Any of them men of merit?" inquired Mary, with a look of grave indignation.

"That is a point of indifference to my aunt. Of two things she would prefer a roué to a saint, lest Adela should be withdrawn from the stare of society, and her own amusements be interfered with by her son-in-law. But wealth and high blood are indispensable qualifications; and till they unite in some pretendant to my cousin's hand, Adela's opinion of her host of lovers will never even be asked."

"Mean while, she will go flirting on, and become heartless and frivolous, and—"

"Every thing a woman of fashion ought to be!—Lady Germaine is enchanted with her daughter's improvement in looks and manners; while Margaret and Jane, (in a glimpse they had of her in a morning visit at the old Duchess of Rackwell's) thought her sadly altered for the worse:—still beautiful, as Adela always must be,—but so artificial,—so *manieree!*"

"Poor Adela!" exclaimed Mary, "I fear we shall live to see her a disappointed and unhappy woman."

"And what is all this Sir Richard has been telling me about Lord Stoneham, my dear Mary?"—retorted her brother, eager to divert the conversation from Adela's crimes and misdemeanors. "Lady Raymond is of opinion that you have made a most important conquest."

"Self-important she means. Yes, my dear Henry, Lord Stoneham actually condescends to speak to me, look at me, and honour me by his languid smiles of approbation; to hint to me that it is not absolutely impossible he may deign to overlook the monstrous disproportion between us; and what is still more extraordinary, he has a father, mother, and sister, stupid enough to conceive it possible I shall profit by his excess of condescension, and be alarmed lest I should snatch at the opportunity of becoming Duchess of Dronington!—Silly people!"

"They do not know my little Mary's spirit and sense of her own dignity," said Henry, laughing at her indignant air. "But *she*, too, has a mother and sisters, and on this occasion, must not wholly overlook their interests."

"How, Henry!—Have *you* also been perverted by Lady Germaine's admonitions, to become the advocate of mercenary marriages?"

"Far from it!—heaven knows, I should be sorry to see a sister of mine united to a prince on such temptations. But Lord Stoneham is highly spoken of in the world as an honourable, gentlemanly young man; and I should regret that you threw away the chance of a happy and prosperous marriage, on the mere pique of a young lady's wounded consequence, or for the sake of prejudices excited against him by Burford Raymond's sneers. Do not be precipitate, my dear Mary."

Yet, in spite of these brotherly cautions, Mary *was* precipitate. Disgusted by the air of nonchalance with which, after Harry's departure for London, the young Marquis was in the habit of establishing himself morning after morning in "the parlour," with Lady R. her pug worsted work and poor relation, and by the rigid austerity of demeanour preserved towards her on every occasion by all the members of the Dronington family, she closed her eyes and heart against the professions of

ardent devotion with which Lord Stoneham finally tendered himself and his brilliant prospects to her acceptance; and even uttered her decisive rejection without one qualifying compliment—one expression of gratitude for his affection!—The amazement of the ducal tribe knew no bounds. Scarcely could her Aunt Germaine have been more astonished at the notion of the heir of the Droningtons meeting with a repulse in such a quarter; and even Sir Richard and Lady Raymond, although they secretly avowed to each other a suspicion that Mary's magnanimous disinterestedness arose solely from a predilection for their own incomparable son,—the old bachelor of the Albany,—were almost inclined to wonder that even Burford Raymond should be able to cast into the shade the supereminent grandeur and dignity of Dronington Manor. It was made an especial request to them by their lovely protegée that no rumour of the circumstance should transpire. She was particularly anxious that her mother should not be vexed by a knowledge of the difficulty she had found in sacrificing her own inclination—her own pride—for the advantage of her family. With one brother a lieutenant of artillery, another an ensign in the Guards, and a third, at Haileybury College preparing for banishment to Madras, she felt almost unpardonable for having entertained any scruples about becoming a duchess.

It is not to be supposed that the baronet copartite thought it necessary to disappoint its paternal and maternal vanity by keeping the fact, and its own surmises thereupon, a secret from Burford Raymond. Sir Richard on his next meeting with his son, frankly declared his opinion that the beautiful Mary had cheerfully sacrificed her brilliant prospects to a hopeless attachment for the topographer of Troy; while Mr. Raymond looked grave—was very sorry for her—begged that his mother would remonstrate with the young person on her absurd infatuation—and seriously assured his father that something better was expected of him in society than to throw himself away on so obscure an individual. He said nothing, however, of his long concocted scheme of increasing his county consequence by an alliance with Lady Caroline Ilderfield; and maintained a similar caution when, three months afterwards, his proposals to

that effect were very pompously declined by his Grace, her father. The Droningtons were delighted with an opportunity of giving blow for blow, refusal for refusal, to their presumptuous neighbours of Langdale House.

Whatever might be Burford's mortification on the subject, it was not of the garrulous order. He never was heard to mention Lady Caroline's name again; and as the Droningtons belonged to a very different London set from that in which he had so long flourished his laurels, he returned to his usual circle to say and eat good things, to be admired, quoted, invited, and listened to, without any apprehension of finding his disappointment the subject of a lampoon:—when, lo! a circumstance occurred which set the reading public, and more particularly that little literary ant-hill in which Burford Raymond was a fetcher and carrier of straws, into an uproar of wonder and investigation.

A poem made its appearance, unenhanced by any claptrap on the part of its publisher,—unannounced as the work of any illustrious and mysterious individual, or of one of the muses living in lodgings in May Fair, —of O. P. Q., or the ghost of Lord Byron. Yet in spite of this unostentatious *debut*, it was hailed by the critics, both professional and honorary, as the finest thing that had startled the public mind for years.—Rogers acknowledged its perfection, Holland House echoed its praises; and even the Quarterly Review had neither a misplaced comma nor a questionable moral sentiment to detect. It was sterling,—admitted at sight among the classics of English literature!

Yet no one fathered the bantling. Its fame grew and grew; edition after edition issued from the press; but not a syllable transpired respecting its authorship. Burford Raymond, like all the rest of the tittle-tattling blues, was in a fever of curiosity. He would have given much for only a distant surmise of the writer, to whisper about as a novelty among the members of his wondering coterie. He forgot his disastrous suit, and even Mary Raymond's unhappy passion for himself, in the eagerness of canvassing, criticising, quoting, applauding, and conjecturing; his whole mind was filled with interest respecting the "prodigy that had made its appearance in the republic of letters."—

His Dorsetshire neighbour, Remington Compton, even earned some credit with him by the able manner in which he set forth its merits in a spirited article in the Edinburgh Review;—in a word, poor Burford could neither eat, drink, nor sleep, except with reference to the poem.

The Baronet his father, and his mother, was seriously afflicted by seeing him so strangely absorbed by a matter which left them very little hope of a realization of their matrimonial projects; and would gladly have seen the tuneful Nine drowned in their own Helicon, to make way for Mary, or some other mundane damsel of equal merit. They had very little suspicion how mighty was the influence likely to be exercised by the new poem and its writer, over the conjugal destinies of their son.

CHAPTER V.

Women who, confident and self-possessed,
By vanity's unwearied finger dress'd,
Forget the blush that virgin fears impart
To modest cheeks, and borrow one from art—
Are just such trifles, without worth or use,
As silly pride and vanity produce;
Curl'd, scented, furbelow'd, and flounced around,
With feet too delicate to touch the ground.

COWPER.

THE beautiful Adela, mean while, was passing a most brilliant season at Brighton. In the illuminated saloons of the Pavilion, (at that period enlivened by the voluptuous court of George IV.) her loveliness and elegance found a congenial atmosphere; and the most refined of modern princes was heard to pronounce to Lady Germaine a verdict equally flattering and discerning on the charms of her graceful daughter.

Adela, delighted with herself and all around her, increased every day in attractions—and pretensions! Af-

ter flirting through the winter, under a persuasion that a degree of popularity such as hers admitted of a relaxation of merely speculative views,—that she, under whose feet admirers started up at every step, might venture to amuse herself for a time without any direct regard to the special license and the diamond necklace,—returned to town just before Easter, eager to start on the course of London dissipation. When, just as she had prepared her finery for the season, her grandmother, the only surviving relative of Lady Germaine, was attacked by a severe, and, as the physicians thought proper to assert, a mortal illness. But it was not the prospect of its mortality which so roused the sympathy of Adela;—the malady was *lingering* as well as dangerous; and as grandmamma not only chanced to have some little property at her disposal, but was an elderly lady of considerable testiness and tenaciousness on points of personal respect, Adela was condemned to seclusion till the crisis of her ladyship's death or recovery. Her white crape, like the green leaves in the song, "all turned yellow;" and instead of Almacks and Kensington Gardens, she was obliged to purr away the months of May, June, and July, in attendance on a fractious narrow-minded old woman; who, after all, thought proper to disavow the decree of the Doctors, disappoint her annuitants, and reassume the control of her own banker's book. The murmurs vented by Lady Germaine on the occasion it is needless to transcribe. Unthinking woman!—She had no hesitation in offering to her own daughter the heinous example of filial ingratitude!—

And thus the month of August found Adela unwearied by the vigils of a single ball, unperplexed by the suit of a single worshipper. "—— Bronze, Esq., and Lady Emily Bronze," were announced as having departed to Italy on a bridal tour; Lady Westerham's wedding-clothes were exhibiting on all the counters in London; and Colonel Rawford was to be seen riding every day in the Park with his bride-elect, the fashionable widow Lady Harman. Lord Stoneham was gone abroad; and of all her votaries, the only one at home, and still disengaged, was the contemned Henry Raymond,—with whom chance brought her occasionally in

contact during Lady Germaine's confinement with her invalid mother. But although Adela Richmond thought proper to accept his arm in her solitary walk in Kensington Gardens, while her carriage waited at the gate; although she extended her hand for the rose which every day he brought as a sentimental pledge to his beautiful cousin; and endured, if she did not precisely return, the pressure lavished by the young guardsman on her hand at parting, she had not the slightest intention of accepting himself:—her views were unaltered. She readily acceded to her mother's proposal of an airing to Fulham soon after the old lady's recovery, without a suspicion that Lady Germaine's sudden intention of visiting "those Raymonds," arose from a discovery that the son of Henry's patron was still unmarried,—still to be had;—with the positive reversion of ten thousand per annum, a baronetcy, and the option of a peerage. Having heard Burford Raymond considerably quoted in the *beau monde* since the abdication of Brummell I., she took it into her head to ascertain from her sister-in-law "what sort of a person was the son of that excellent creature Sir Richard?"—or, in other words, whether he were likely to prove an eligible match for Adela. Miss Richmond was now in her twentieth year; and her ladyship began to think it time she should be settled in life. The amiable couple put on a plausible face as they drove to the door; mutually observing that "it was a tremendous long time since they had been there, but that they must make the best of it." Lady Germaine sailed magnificently through the little flower-garden, and Adela followed, with her accustomed mincing step of affectation; assuming the air—as they always did on occasion of their visits to "those Raymonds"—of descending goddesses, irradiating with their presence some scene of vulgar mortality.

But they soon found there was no occasion to make the best of it. "Those Raymonds" were very well contented to accept the worst. The active, virtuous, frugal mother entertained so much contemptuous compassion for the fine-lady widow of her brother, that she had no inclination to declare war against her neglect or her insolence; while her daughters, really loving and really pitying their cousin Adela, received her with

all their usual smiles, if not their usual cordiality. It is possible they might feel inclined (particularly Margaret) to resent her hard-heartedness towards their brother; but Harry invariably made it his entreaty that they would not on his account withdraw their good will from the child of his earliest benefactor.

Somewhat surprised by their Christian forbearance, Lady Germaine was still more astonished at the remarkable change visible in the establishment of her sister-in-law. That look of indigence which was wont to jar so painfully against her own self-love, had entirely disappeared. There was an appearance of comfort, of even elegance, in the sitting-room—of care and cultivation in the lawn; while the dress and air of the three sisters were scarcely inferior in fashion to that of Adela herself. She, who had come prepared to patronise, to instruct, to depreciate, saw occasion to amend her own taste on a survey of "those Raymonds" and their little fairy palace. Moreover, she found Mr. Compton established among them on the most familiar footing; a man who, though only the son of a new peer, had already placed himself on a pedestal of his own, as one of the most eminent speakers and writers of the day; and while Adela was still wondering to which of her three cousins his homage was addressed, she was startled by Henry's arrival, and the warm greeting bestowed upon him by his family.

"I have brought you a present, dearest mother," said he, secretly pleased with an opportunity of elevating her in presence of the scornful Lady Germaine; "I have received a letter this morning from Lord Stoneham, who is now at Rome, begging me to solicit in his name your acceptance of this box of cameos. They seem very fine, and in sufficient abundance to gratify the vanity of yonder three silly girls."

"Very fine indeed!" said Lady Germaine, looking the other way as Mrs. Raymond opened the casket, and offered it for her inspection.

"Very beautiful indeed,—if any one could devise a method of making them either useful or ornamental," echoed Adela.

"At present they are chiefly useful," observed Mr. Compton, significantly, "in proving that my friend

Stoneham has a constant as well as a tender heart.—I honour him."

And as he uttered this oracular sentence, Adela looked again most earnestly towards her cousins, to ascertain which of the three betrayed consciousness on the occasion. But again she was at fault. Margaret and Jane loved Mary too dearly not to blush as deeply as herself on any allusion to a subject so interesting to her feelings. Adela was completely puzzled!—Nor did Lady Germaine manage to enlighten herself in a more satisfactory manner with respect to the heir of Langdale House. All the interrogations, direct and indirect, she could venture to address to her sister-in-law on the subject, only availed to inform her that Burford Raymond was about to pass the autumn in Dorsetshire; that Mary, Margaret, and Jane, had been invited severally and collectively to visit Sir Richard and Lady Raymond during the period of his stay; and that each and all preferred accompanying their mother to the Isle of Wight, whither the whole of the family was on the point of adjourning.

Lady Germaine now rose to depart in a very ill humour. But while Harry was most assiduous in offering his arm to convey her to the carriage, Mr. Compton remained fixed in his seat; and instead of attending Adela to the door, drew his chair closer to the table with that air of release after the thraldom of a formal visit, which plainly says, "Now you are going, we shall all be very comfortable." She began to feel herself ill-used;—to decide that there was something odd, something wrong about "those Raymonds." What could they mean by such proceedings?—the son of Lord Soho dangling after those portionless girls!—She would take care that the parents of that flippant, easy Mr. Remington Compton received due hint and warning of the business.

And then, the girls!—Mary was growing very handsome to be sure; but however rich the ringlets of her hair, what pretension had she to a comb like Adela's?—Jane was a very pretty little girl, with a foot of the dimensions of Cinderella's; but was that a reason that her French gaiters should resemble those of Miss Richmond?—As for Mrs. Raymond herself, nothing could

be plainer than that she was either running in debt on the chance of making an advantageous marriage for one of her daughters; or that she was herself privately married to that great lumbering yellow nabob old Orme, who had been so anxious to make her his own shortly after poor Raymond's decease. Lady Germaine desired her daughter would take an opportunity of cross-questioning Henry on all these matters.

While the Fulham family were enjoying at once the brilliancy of their own prospects and those of the Isle of Wight, Adela and her mother found themselves most unsatisfactorily planted for the autumn in a dull dowager house of grandmamma's, a place very unpropitious to any thing like match-making; a dwelling over whose gateway Lady Germaine, the manœuvrer, saw inscribed,

Lasciate ogni PROGETTO voi ch' entrate!

There was, however, some consolation in this inopportune exile. Her daughter was secure at Colston from any communication with her cousin Henry; ran no chance of collision with "those Raymonds;" and after five months of drowsy retirement, was likely to re-appear in the world more radiant, more beautiful than ever.

But Lady Germaine relied too fondly on the good effects of country air, regular hours, and regular habits. Albeit herself considerably versed in the arts and mysteries of beauty or beautification, she overlooked the fact so manifest to less prejudiced eyes, that there is a softness, delicacy, purity, and transparency connected with extreme youth,—a smile of girlhood,—a glance of perfect artlessness, which is seldom to be found after the 31st of December of their twentieth year; a charm which, evanescent as a rainbow, departs with the teens, and is incompatible with the maturer pride of beautiful one-and-twenty. To a *blonde* like Adela, the epoch is arbitrary. The slightest blemish traceable on the snow destroys its dazzling brightness; and though Miss Richmond might still claim precedence as one of the finest girls in London—as graceful, elegant, and accomplished—that overpowering brilliancy of beauty which had marked her *debut*, was gone and for ever.

Wholly unaware of the change, and possessing, it must be owned, strong incentives to vanity in the admiration which greeted her re-appearance in society at the commencement of the following season (Adela's third in town,) Lady Germaine opened the campaign with a serious determination to render it decisive. Her daughter had amused herself too long,—it was now time for business; and severe instructions were issued from the war-office that every nerve should be strained, every resource put into activity to secure the field. But, alas! her ladyship forgot that the tactics of great commanders reject all this parade—this

Pomp and circumstance of glorious war—

and no sooner did the detrimentals perceive that Adela had been required to evade the claims of former partners, and reserve her smiles for the *etat major* of the eligibles, than they enrolled themselves in the "younger brothers' union," and placed her for the first time on the muster-roll of the *marrying* young ladies. They soon forgot the beautiful, the radiant Adela Richmond, in the daughter of the finessing Lady Germaine.

CHAPTER VI.

Where old simplicity,
Though hid in gray
Doth look more gay
Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad.

RANDOLPH.

MEAN WHILE an event occurred in the Raymond family, which though a source of real affliction among them, would have assumed a very different aspect but for the judicious steadiness of purpose which had induced Sir Richard to pre-assure a provision for his young kinsman. Half (the masculine half) of the good old Baro-

net died!—died, as the newspapers say, "deeply regretted by his disconsolate family and a large circle of surviving friends."

Seldom indeed is so favourable a verdict pronounced by the jury of society on one of its departed members, as in the case of Sir Richard Raymond. However slenderly endowed with those capacities and acquirements, constituting, in the opinion of the Droningtons and his erudite son, the character of "an English gentleman," the old man contrived to leave behind him a widow *really* disconsolate,—really satisfied that her business in life was over,—that nothing remained for her but the family vault; an estate increased by two-fifths in value since his accession; an orphan relative, raised to an honourable position in society through his interposition and generosity; a circle of neighbours, among whom he had never introduced an evil word or evil feeling; and a body of tenantry the most prosperous and contented to be met with in the county. After all, he certainly could dispense with the reputation of having Bernasconied the staring red façade of Langdale House, or introduced new ottomans and claw tables into its comfortless parlour; more especially since some hundreds of acres on Langdale Chase were converted into thriving woodlands during his reign.

The good old gray-headed man was laid in his grave amid the tears of the young and the reverent stillness of the old. On the Sunday following his interment, not an eye in Langdale Church could fix itself on the black hangings on Dr. Docket's pulpit. The people felt chilled, desolate, abandoned. Their friend was gone;—their good kind friend, who had lived among them so much more as a father than as a magistrate or a landlord. It may be questioned whether the demise of the best classic of all the universities, English, Scotch, or Metropolitan, would have produced half so many aching hearts.

On opening the will, it was a matter of equal surprise and regret to the executors and the leading gentlemen of the neighbourhood, that Sir Richard, whose estates were unentailed, had made no contingent provision for their reversion to Harry Raymond in case of Sir Burford's decease, unmarried or childless. No-

thing could be more apparent to them all than the distaste cherished by the present Baronet against his father's favourite, unless the fact that Sir Burford would certainly live and die a bachelor; and there was no calculating to whom the peevish jealousy of his narrow mind might instigate him to bequeath the family property, in order to avoid the possibility of benefiting "those Raymonds." He detested them almost as much as Lady Germaine; regarding Mary's insolent conquest of the Marquis of Stoneham as the chief source of his own rejection by Lady Caroline Ilderfield; and Harry's inordinate popularity with the thrones and dominions of Dorsetshire, as the principal cause of the coldness testified towards himself. He ascribed nothing to the evil influence of that supercilious self-opiniated egotism which rendered him so uncompanionable and so unloveable; qualifying him far better for his sullen selfish chambers in Albany, than for the presidency of a house and estate such as that of Langdale.

But although the father had judged it illiberal to shackle the property of his son with other conditions than those under which it had descended to himself, he felt at liberty to bequeath to Harry (at the death of Lady Raymond) a small estate in Kent, which had lately fallen to himself by the will of a friend; and to each of the Raymond girls an annuity of fifty pounds per annum. It was not much,—not more than Sir Burford could very well spare from his twelve or fourteen thousand per annum; yet those who fancied they knew him best, asserted that Sir Richard could not have taken a more infallible method to alienate his son's regard from the family, and to obliterate all chance of the eventual accession of his favourite Harry to the heirless dignities of Langdale. It was said that he did not invite young Raymond to re-enter the house which had been so long his home, after the melancholy ceremony of his benefactor's interment; and that his earliest exhortation to the remaining moiety of the Baronet,—the disconsolate relict of Sir Richard,—regarded a cessation of intercourse with the needy kindred on whom she had been accustomed to lavish so much kindness and liberality. All this was said;—and if

true, certainly reflected no credit on the learned pundit.

Mean while, Sir Burford Raymond's *debut* in London, enrobed in his new dignities, was almost as important an enterprise as that of Lady Germaine's daughter.

Dearly as he loved the importance affixed by his own exertions to the name he had earned in society, he was by no means insensible to the charm of being Sir Burforded; and, partial as he avowed himself to his bachelor chambers, the bustle and anxieties of purchasing and inhabiting a magnificent mansion in May Fair, afforded a charming excitement to his jaded mind. The finicalities of furnishing, picture-dealing, and collecting old china and scarce books, were in fact exactly consonant with the fiddle-faddle tone of his character. He had no gratification in the possession of a fine Vandyke, Aldus, or Cellini, at all equal to that derived from the flummery of the auctioneers, dealers, and collectors, gathered around him by the officiousness of the Rev. Nicodemus Fagg; and the incense of a little levee of the meanest order of literati,—the grubs which are generated and fed upon the laurel. He liked to see his purchases and proceedings noticed in the papers; and never prized his Baronetship so highly as when it illuminated the proceedings of some learned body with the announcement of "Sir Burford Raymond, Bart., in the chair."

This flattering unction was soothing enough as far as it went; but it was not all-sufficient to a man of such unbounded stomach in the vanities of life. The mansion in May Fair when completed,—with all its Etruscan cornices and Vitruvian mouldings, its Parian and gold-veined marbles, its jasper pedestals and columns of porphyry, its Flemish school and Italian school, its Phidian gallery and Canova vestibule, its Gobelin tapestry and Venetian pier-glasses,—was found wanting in one of the most important adjuncts of a noble mansion. The Venus of Medicis stood in her appointed niche, the Venus of Thorwaldson lay sporting amid her roses; and many a nymph, and many a beauteous saint, and many a goddess smiled from the lofty walls upon the little baronet. But no animated nymph, no goddess in a gown of *gros de Naples*, displayed her round-

ed contour or graceful brows in the dull silent chambers. Such a one was not to be purchased at the curiosity shops, nor selected through a magnifying glass in Christie's rooms; and Sir Burford discovered that in the event of his making up his mind to complete his collection by the purchase of a wife, he must go forth Faggless into society, frequent the ball-room, the opera, the park, and descend for a time from the altitudes of his uncontrolled self-importance.

His chief object in such an undertaking was to mortify Lady Caroline Ilderfield. Still unmarried and verging towards the scraggy, loveless joyless epoch, of five-and-thirty, the Duke of Dronington's daughter had more than once been tempted to lament her father's pompous rejection of her Dorsetshire neighbour's son; and now, on his re-appearance in the world under such brilliant auspices, made up her mind to attempt the renovation of his passion.—She might as well have undertaken the re-vivification of a mummy!—On the whole, indeed, although the remembrance of his disappointment still rankled in his mind, he felt no reason to regret the appointment or disappointment of his matrimonial destinies. He now considered himself far above the necessity of deriving conventional dignity from the alliance of any ladyship in the land; and was of opinion that the mind of Lady Caroline Ilderfield was not sufficiently cultivated nor her tastes sufficiently classical to make her acceptable as the presiding deity of the temple he had created:—she had once spoken of Cicero in his hearing as a Greek poet!—To his perceptions, nothing could exceed the importance of his own circle,—of the orbit in which for many years past he had been revolving so entirely to his own satisfaction: and it would have given him little pleasure to behold any one of his twenty-seven Venuses Pygmalionized for his sake, had he been pre-assured that the new mortal would prove insufficiently intellectual and accomplished for the atmosphere of his literary coterie.

Such was the man on whom Lady Germaine undertook to make an impression in favour of her beautiful daughter; such the being for whom Adela was instructed to clothe her brow in wisdom, and attune her dis-

course to the jargon of May Fair philosophy. The acquaintance was soon made, and followed up by an invitation to dinner on her ladyship's part, and a request on that of Sir Burford that the ladies would condescend to come and view his pictures; and not even on a first introduction, not even while still unfamiliar with his narrow countenance, and mean graceless person, did Adela dream of comparing him disadvantageously with his handsome namesake, her youthful playmate, her devoted cousin Harry. She could see nothing ugly or disagreeable in Sir Burford. Was he not a man of fifteen thousand a-year,—a town house and country seat; and had he not been for twenty years past a somebody in society, a person universally accepted?—In a word, was he not a very good match?—

It was really amusing,—at least it would have amused any one but Nicodemus Fagg, who was alone present on the occasion, and was too much of a manœuvrer on his own account to see any matter for jest in the avidity of others,—to observe the inventorial eye with which Lady Germaine made the tour of Sir Burford's mansion. All that she saw or heard was with reference to Adela, to a liberal settlement, to a widow's thirds. What cared she for Pæstum or Pompeii,—or whether the Guido to which her observation was directed by Sir Burford, had originally graced the Houghton collection or the Lanfranchi palace?—While her host was talking to her of the incense-pots and pateræ in use among the Phœnicians, exhibiting an unimpugnable specimen of Corinthian metal, or rehearsing the beauties of the sardonyx of Polycrates while he paraded a chalice adorned with studs of that precious gem,—Lady Germaine was secretly reverting to the possibility that all these treasures might be made heir-looms, and alienated from the personality so precious to the cupidity of widowhood. The only interest vouchsafed by the dowager to the objects placed before her eyes, arose from a doubt concerning their reconvertibility into the currency from whence they sprang; the only care entertained by the daughter, in surveying the home she was already determined to render her own, arose from incertitude, whether a suite so encumbered with objects

of virtù, were favourable to fashionable hospitality?—She almost doubted whether Sir Burford would not prove too blue to be a giver of balls.

But this was a minor point to Lady Germaine. The Honourable Lady Raymond, of Langdale House and Seamore Place, would be quite enough of a personage to satisfy her ambition for her daughter. Sir Burford, it is true, was a twaddler,—a man of a circle;—but he would the less interfere with the amusements and vanities of his young wife. She made it appear pretty plainly, (so plainly that even Nicodemus could decipher the text without spectacles) that the *cognoscente* had only to propose, to be enabled to add the prettiest woman in London to his collection of rarities.

Why did he hesitate?—Was he aware that the existence of his handsome cousin of the Guards might interpose a dangerous obstacle to his conjugal happiness?—Did it occur to him that twenty and four and forty, are epochs divided by twenty-four fatal anniversaries of moral nature?—that the bright ringlets of the fashionable belle were less accordant with the outline of his own bald pate, than the heads of Paris and Helen in his favourite intaglio?—that

> *Middle* age and youth
> Cannot live together?—

that the Almack's goddess, the nymph of the park, would certainly have experienced little inclination for a niche in his gallery, had it not been for the splendour of the car on which her journey thither was to be executed?—No! he thought of none of these things!—Regarding himself as the most attractive of mankind, as a *partie* inferior only to the Duke of Derbyshire, he still hesitated, from secret motives, to throw the Satrap kerchief of election to the lovely Adela Richmond. This vacillation of mind was extremely tiresome and perplexing to Lady Germaine. What was the man about? Opulent, independent, in every sense his own master, what *could* prevent him from accelerating an event, which forty-four years subtracted from three-score left him so little leisure to enjoy? Perhaps, he was breaking off some unsatisfactory connexion:—perhaps, he

was building a carriage,—perhaps, a wig;—but why not propose *ad interim* and terminate the dilemma? Still he went on accepting her ladyship's dinner parties, —sitting nailed to a chair at the back of her ladyship's opera-box,—calling her ladyship's carriage:—but why not propose?—Could it be respect to the memory of his father, which suggested the delay of so festive a rite as the hymeneal? Absurd!—impossible!—in the nineteenth century, and a man so intellectual. No! no! Sir Burford Raymond was too much of a philosopher for the old woman's prejudice of filial tenderness.

May passed away,—June came and went with its roses,—strawberries were already out of season (except for the "lower classes") and cherries were becoming plebeian food;—yet no proposal!—Lady Germaine grew angry; and began to lament that her nephew, Lord Germaine, was still at Eton, and too juvenile to be alarming either as a rival or antagonist. Certainly the conduct of Sir Burford was such as to call for explanation. For three months he had entirely engrossed her daughter's attention. He must have seen that in compliment to his mute courtship, Adela had remained sedentary at half the balls of the season; had given up waltzing, riding, flirting; had sobered herself down to the decorum of the middle-aged Strephon;—had assumed the sententious prosiness of the learned fellow, the demure gravity of the "English gentleman." She had forfeited half her natural graces by forming herself on the model of a Dorsetshire Baronetess! All this was lost time, unless the head of the house of Raymond had *serious* intentions. Another season was gone;—gone in fruitless manœuvres, and most unsatisfactory self-denial. It was difficult to say whether Lady Germaine were most irate against Sir Burford, her daughter, or herself.

In the midst of her misgivings and vexations, it struck her that the Reverend Nicodemus might be the secret enemy, the preacher of precaution. Such a Tartuffe as he looked;—so sly, so smooth, so mischievous!—Surely, a man with so glozing a smile, and a voice so hypocritically tuneful, must be open to bribery and corruption? Lady Germaine took to helping him at table to the heads of the carp, the *foie gras* of the *ragout mele*,

the thighs of the pheasant poult; nominated him her chaplain, and enclosed him a hundred pound note in the letter of appointment. The Reverend Nicodemus accepted, bowed, smiled, and ate,—but said not a word; when, three days after the last-named act of munificence, "Sir Burford Raymond, Bart. for Italy," was announced among the fashionable departures; while the learned Pundit and his new chaplain forwarded to the Dowager their cards of P. P. C. by the hands of the under footman.

CHAPTER VI.

Forgets her labour as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song.

Cowper.

Perhaps, Lady Germaine had some little right to be in a rage on occasion of this base act of desertion. She, at least, did not call it in question; and was just as angry as an author at the hissing of his play, or Napoleon during the concluding cannonade of Hougoumont. She was defeated, *done*, overmatched,—while her daughter was not matched at all!

But what was the augmentation of her disgust and fury, when circumstances brought to light the true motives of Sir Burford's abrupt departure! He had been refused,—absolutely refused by one of "those Raymonds." While her own beautiful Adela was engaged in smiling her sweetest smiles at him, and intent only on waiting the honour of his nod matrimonial, Margaret Raymond had calmly, coolly, and deliberately rejected his addresses!—Margaret Raymond,—a poor sickly thing, with nothing on earth to recommend her but a pair of sentimental gray eyes, and an annuity of fifty pounds per annum, payable from his own estate. Was such an insult to be borne?—Lady Germaine re-

doubled her injunctions to Miss Richmond to withdraw the light of her countenance from the family; and contented herself with turning her back upon Harry when he ventured to approach her at the last ball of the season.

But could there be any real foundation for the report? Could Sir Burford Raymond, who held the name of his poor relations in abhorrence—who had looked year after year with indifference upon the rare beauty of his cousin Mary—who breathed but in the atmosphere of fashion,—and scarcely recognised the existence of persons uninclined in his own set, could *he* by any possibility have found his way to Fulham; by any possibility have discovered a heart to place at the disposal of the gentle Margaret?—At all events he found a *hand;*—nay! even the decency to tender it in the most respectful and deferential manner, to offer an *amende honorable* for past offences, to restore Henry Raymond to his forfeited honours at Langdale, and the whole family to the open arms of his delighted old mother.

Margaret, however, was inflexible. Without thinking it necessary to explain to her disappointed suitor that her heart had already spoken in favour of Mr. Compton, and that Remington had only delayed speaking in favour of himself till he should conquer the honourable independence necessary to support a wife, she assured him that neither time nor place would effect the least change in her sentiments towards himself, the seat in Dorsetshire, or the mansion in May Fair. She would have nothing to say to him or his.

It is true that even Margaret, although of so soft and imperturbable a disposition, was for a moment startled from her usual serenity by the miracle of Sir Burford's addresses. But she soon laughingly confessed to her sisters and brother, her suspicions that it was the *authoress*, not the woman, he was anxious to make his wife; that his sudden passion arose solely from the discovery that Harry Raymond's second sister, the patient unassuming invalid of the cottage at Fulham, was, in fact, the inspired writer—the brilliantly successful writer—of that poem which had caused a revolution on Mount Parnassus, and troubled even the halcyon-haunted waters of Helicon! She perceived that to so profound a

classic, the laurel was far beyond the myrtle,—and fame immeasurably more precious than reputation.

And she was right in her conjecture. A wife who had been lauded in the Quarterly, eulogized in the Edinburgh, sanctioned in the Westminster, and smothered in the panegyrics of New Monthly and Old—Fraser, Blackwood, and Athenæum—immortalized in the Literary Gazette—renowned in the National Omnibus; a candidate for Westminster Abbey—a subject for the chisel and graver; how could the classical Raymond, the blue Baronet, ponder without enthusiasm on the honours thus introduced into his family; on his own obscure patronymic sent forth to the four corners of the earth by the unsilenceable trumpet of fame!—What would he have given to call her his; to place her in perpetual presidency over his coterie of May Fair; and behold the laurels of her garland budding among the Weymouth-pine plantations of Langdale House!

But it was not to be. Margaret, with all her sensitive timidity, possessed that tone of decision inseparable from good sense. In the course of half an hour's conversation she made it appear so plainly to her lofty kinsman he had no chance of effecting an impression on her feelings, that Sir Burford, when he re-entered his carriage to return to town, had already decided on prolonging his journey along the Dover road on the following morning. He was aware that Dr. Fagg had long been in correspondence with the Superior of the Armenian Convent at Venice, touching a Sanscrit MS. on the game of Chess, dated five hundred and seventy years before the Flood; and would gladly accompany him to "the cradle of learning and nursery of the arts," as Sir Burford and the rest of the phrase-mongers are fond of denominating Italy.

In the course of this brief exposition of her views and opinions, Margaret Raymond contrived, moreover, to render her suitor sensible of something more than her own insensibility. Without assuming a tone either of dictation or remonstrance, she managed to place before his eyes the narrowness of his character, the unfiliality of his conduct towards his worthy father and mother, the ungenerous nature of his feelings towards her brother Henry, the barren nothingness of his own career.

He was surprised—angry of course;—but hinted that in the course of his Italian tour he might perhaps be tempted to lay her lessons to his heart.

Certes, a more charming monitress than Margaret would have been difficult to find! High-minded, but with a voice, like Desdemona's, "ever soft and low," —lofty in her sentiments, yet lowly in her own self-estimation,—cultivated in mind and manners, yet fulfilling, without even the notion of debasement; all the humble offices inseparable from the necessities of her family, Margaret had cherished her fine gift of poetical inspiration as the consolation of her hours of sickness, as the brightener of her clouded fortunes; nor was it till she was taught to regard this well-spring of her earthly desert as a source of prosperity to the good mother who had borne and sacrificed so much for the sake of herself, her brothers and sisters, that she began to recognise its value. Provided the seed could be sown in secret, the harvest gathered in the dark, so as to conceal her exertions in their behalf, Margaret readily consented to attempt the replenishment of the garners of her family; and it was a gratification inappreciably beyond the hollow triumphs of vanity, to contribute to the comfort of those who had so tenderly watched over her own. Like a honey-bee, she clung to the flower-garden only to provide winter subsistence for the hive.

She spared them, however, all the anxieties of her venture; preserving the secret of her undertaking even from her beloved Harry, till she was enabled to offer to her mother a fifth edition of her work, and a sum of one thousand pounds. By the ministry of a faithful friend she had effected all her negotiations, realized all her profits. How grateful she was to him for his advice and interposition;—how grateful to the Mighty Source of every better gift, for imparting to her mind those impulses which were the real origin of her prosperity!

"A faithful friend?"—We trust none among our readers have ventured to suggest an idea that Mr. Compton was the bosom counsellor of Margaret on this critical occasion; for at that period, Miss Raymond was acquainted with Lord Soho's son only through his literary reputation, and as an old brother Wintonian of Henry; she had not even seen him since his boyhood, when he

occasionally paid a holiday visit to the protegée of his father's neighbour, Sir Richard Raymond. No! the faithful friend was no Mr. Compton; no hero of romance; no lover in disguise;—it was the yellow lumbering nabob, old Orme!

Honestly and humbly would we apologize to the manes of that excellent man for this tardy mention and procrastinated development of his character; but knowing him to have been a hater of hollow forms, we desist. Rupert Orme was in fact a very singular man,—singular by nature, singular by circumstance; the strange chances of destiny had preserved him unsophisticated among all the conventionalities of modern life. From his swaddling clothes to his shroud, the boy, the man, the veteran, afforded but a prolongation of the same thread. He was an oddity from his birth, without the smallest suspicion of his own originality.

Rupert had been the friend of Raymond's father previously to his own departure for India. He was a man of what is called "no family;" that is, he was the son of a yeoman of some twenty pure descents of yeoman blood. But whereas this twenty-first representative of the Ormes of Barleyholme chanced to be at once a man of no family and the father of one of considerable extent. Rupert, his ninth son, was despatched to India under the patronage of a Leadenhall-street godfather, at a period when the Pagoda tree, having been less roughly shaken than now, was still prolific of golden fruit. At twenty-one years of age, he was appointed Judge of a district with an unpronounceable name, somewhere midway between Bombay and Calcutta; where he found himself destined to pass as many more years as he had already breathed the breath of life, among a tribe of dingy heathens, of whom it would be difficult to say whether the idol divinities or their human prototypes were the more hideous.

Residing thus in the midst of fellow-creatures with whom he had neither possessed an idea in common, nor could exchange a single observation, it is plain that his own ideas must have multiplied exceedingly, and his own observations waxed most abundant. He became a sort of Nepaulitan Jaques,—a free commoner of the mango-groves,—a muser among the paddy-fields,—a

Cowper, substituting a cage of tiger-whelps for one of domesticated hares,—a bowl of sangaree for the bubbling and loud-hissing urn, and the lotus of the Ganges for the water-lily of the Ouse. He was an amiable philosopher, walking about with a Welch nightcap and tassel amid the shadows of the banyan trees, and the haunts of the Cobra de Capellas.

But not even the most amiable philosophy is proof against the irritations of bilious disorganization. Cowper himself, the mild Melancthon, or Shenstone of the purling rills, would have become fretful, and like Shakspeare's soldier "full of strange oaths," had they been grilled into a liver complaint, or stewed over the slow fire of Hindostanic earth. At five and forty, Rupert Orme was as yellow as a ripe magnum-bonum plum; at fifty, as brown and speckled as an Havannah cigar; at fifty-five, he was seen scudding laboriously at the regular constitution trot on the Montpelier Parade at Cheltenham Spa; and at sixty, he had been refused by his friend Raymond's widow,—was established as the proprietor of a fine house in Portland Place,—and (in spite of his caxon and velveteens) as the favourite friend and adviser of the gifted Margaret.

An opinion is prevalent in the world, that nothing is so fatal to the fortunes of a young widow as a large little family. But the case was exactly reversed with Mrs. Raymond. Rupert had been so long a homeless, companionless, affectionless man, that the sight of so many young and blooming faces was new and beautiful in his eyes. Their joyous voices spoke to his very heart; their endearments thrilled through his very soul. He longed to make them his own; he would have married them all,—girls, boys, and mother,—without a moment's hesitation. Their penury was nothing to him; he had a home and a heart for the whole family.

But whether Mrs. Raymond still retained a few of her Richmond prejudices (she had scarcely been eight years a wife,) and found it difficult to establish a parallel between the bright-eyed daughter of a Lord Germaine, and the caxonacious scion of Barleyholme; or whether she found it impossible to replace the image of the young and handsome Raymond in her heart (she had scarcely been two years a widow,) by that of the

contemplative philosopher in velveteens—the disjointed Goliah of the Gauts—she declined his overtures of alliance, and would accept nothing at his hands but a writership for her youngest boy. Charles, the eldest, had already been entered at Woolwich; Henry was living with her brother Germaine; but little Willie she placed under the guardianship of the man she did not love sufficiently to marry, or perhaps respected too much to marry without loving.

Old Orme was satisfied; not quite, but very nearly. He had found an object on which to vent his affection; for of the Ormes of Barleyholme, with the exception of one boor of a nephew, the representative of the estate, all had disappeared; and as Mrs. Raymond was too wise to affect any sentimental coyness towards an old man of Rupert's complexion, who had wooed her chiefly for the pleasure of feeding her young ravens, he soon found himself a welcome guest at Fulham whenever he chose to extend his airings in that direction, and a favourite with all the little boys and girls. He was satisfied: for he had discovered the means of making himself happy through the happiness of others.

And why, it may be asked, was this munificent man, this anxious benefactor of an orphan family, so slow in redeeming them from the degradations of poverty?—Why took he no direct means to place them above the privations of their narrow fortunes?—He was an oddity!—In that one word every inconsistency may be included; but those who are willing to give him credit for the best motives, are at liberty to infer that Rupert's experience confirmed the lesson that

Sweet are the uses of adversity!

—the opinion that persons who struggle with the cares of life in the onset of their career, are fitted to defy all future vicissitudes; that those who have been nursed in the storm and nurtured in the whirlwind, are most capable of appreciating the beauty of the rainbow, and the charm of the sunshine. He knew he should always be at hand in case of an emergency; and loved, mean while, to applaud the honest pride with which the widow conformed to her sunken fortunes, the gentle hu-

mility with which the girls attempted to lighten her task. He was not at all eager to augment their means of education or accomplishment; he was not desirous of seeing them more choice in their attire, more prone to the empty diversions of society; but rejoiced that the three girls were in training to become good wives, good mothers, good Christians; and perhaps considered that the thorns of their garland became them even better than its roses.

He was an oddity; but he was also human, and subject to the frailties of humanity. Is there not, therefore, a possibility that this precautionary wisdom might arise from the tyrannical vagaries of a mind matured and orientalized in a province midway between Bombay and Calcutta?—from the acquired despotism of a nature dieted for five and twenty years on currie and mulligatawney?—And, above all, might not Cupid, or Mahadeo, or some eastern or western god of love and lovers,—overlooking both caxen and velveteens and a pair of cheeks and top-boots of the Havannah complexion,—be the secret instigator of all his prudential forbearance? Might not Rupert Orme imagine that the solicitude of maternal affection would at length drive into his arms the mother of Charles, Henry, and William; of Mary, Margaret, and Jane?

If such his view of the case, it proved fallacious. Every day the widow learned to regard him with a more friendly familiarity; but with a firmer degree of self-gratulation that she had evaded the distress of becoming wife to the ungainly, uncouth benefactor of her children; a being whose soul and body were completely out of joint,—and who was incapable of seeing, hearing, and feeling things as they are seen, heard, and felt by other people.

There cannot be a more curious object of inquiry to a lover of speculative philosophy, than a man of acute perceptions and strong understanding, who has been thus suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between earth and air; a man of books and meditations, who has lived apart from his kind; and suddenly finding himself dropped from the skies into the hubbub of a city, considers every thing in the abstract, and is still untrammelled by the prejudices and verdicts of society;—a

man who has never in his life set foot in that illuminated house of correction—a London drawing-room!

Rupert Orme was full of odd conceits, and crammed with the opinions of the fifteenth century. He looked upon poetry, painting, and music, as the appanage of kings; as mechanical inventions, good for what they would fetch, or baubles peculiarly appropriate to courtly delectation. A fine picture, like a stray sturgeon, should be reserved, he thought, for the appetite of the great; and a book of poetry, he regarded like ermine and minever, as a graceful superfluity intended for the magnates of the land.

When taken into Margaret's confidence respecting her own, he pointed out to her that it was as much her duty to convert her talents into the means of maintenance for her family, as if she were in possession of a string of pearls, or some other costly trinket. Yet even with this contracted view of things, the old man formed a sane judgment of its merits. He saw that it was good; that it came straight from the mint of a fine imagination, and a pure and glowing heart. He told her it could not be overlooked; and his prognostications were verified. The value accorded by all classes of society to the flower thus suddenly uprooted from its solitude, and put forth to blossom in the eye of day, eventually secured ease and recreation to the little cottage at Fulham; and obtained for the gentle Margaret, the adoration of a congenial mind in the person of Mr. Compton. Nay, it even tended to restore her brother Henry to the forbidden halls of Langdale House.

Rupert Orme was triumphant!—On hearing of Sir Burford's proposal, he puckered his yellow cheeks into a smile, and indulged in an effort of cachinnation very much resembling the neigh of a zebra.

CHAPTER VII.

Now labyrinths, which but themselves can pierce,
Methinks conduct them to some pleasant ground,
Where welcome hills shut out the universe,
And pines their lawny walk encompass round.

CAMPBELL.

It was a very happy autumn, a very cheerful winter, that once-more united the Raymond family at Langdale, under the auspices of the worthy widow. They felt it impossible to decline the invitation of one who had been so much a mother to Henry; more especially as her own son—her sole relative—was just then estranged from his home and country by the obduracy of Margaret. They regretted to leave old Orme to the dreariness of his uncompanionable existence. But Henry was in town on duty, and promised to be diligent in his visits to Portland Place; and Charles, who was now in the artillery, promised to run up occasionally from Woolwich, and cheer the solitude of his old friend.

Mean while the sisters led a cheerful happy life, which borrowed neither monotony nor insipidity from their experience of the giddy levities of a London season. Mary had often described Langdale to them as dull and desolate, but she now admitted that Burford's presence must have been the drawback on its attractions; for she grew daily fonder of the place, and confirmed the opinion of Margaret and Jane that nothing could exceed the beauty of its woods and plantations. The former admired them because they commanded a fine view of Compton Park; the latter because they enabled her to pursue the suggestions of her own buoyant youth and

sportive animation, and run, skip, and laugh, as girls of sixteen are apt to do, who have not the fear of the governess before their eyes. Margaret, however, was seldom of their rambles; her health was too delicate to admit of more than an airing in the pony carriage, with her mother or Lady Raymond; but Mary and Jane were delighted to find their way through the woods to meet the daughter of Lord Soho, with whom they lived on terms of neighbourly friendship, and who had recently returned from a sojourn on the coast.

Alicia Compton was one of the liveliest, drollest creatures in existence,—a person regarding all things and all people on their comic side, who had never known a care, never experienced a regret; the darling of a prosperous and happy family. She was fond of the Raymond girls; fond of laughing with them at the solemn coxcombicality of their cousin Burford, the preposterous affectation of Lady Caroline Ilderfield; and of projecting schemes for the re-union of two persons who, she protested, were born for each other. Sometimes, indeed, she included even Lord Stoneham in these sportive satires; till repeated experience led her to discover that Mary was apt to take upon herself the championship of the absent Marquis, with more vivacity than might have been inferred from her unrelenting rejection of his suit.

"There is a great difference between making him my husband and the object of my perpetual ridicule," was the young lady's self-defence, when her leniency towards him was pointed out. "If *you* had seen so much of him, dearest Alicia, as I have, you would know that his manners are more objectionable than his understanding. With all Lord Stoneham's seeming silliness, it will one day be discovered that he has a good head and a better heart."

"Then why did you refuse him?" was on the point of rising to Alicia's lips, but she saw that Mary's cheek was already flushed with embarrassment and vexation, and good-naturedly dropped the conversation. Alicia had sometimes found her own colour rise to a tint extremely unsatisfactory to herself, when another young gentleman of the neighbourhood was made the subject

of discussion; and she therefore forbore to retaliate upon poor Mary Raymond.

It chanced, mean while, that one fine day in September, (one of those days of streamy yellow sunshine when the landscape seems enriched by an atmosphere of gold) the three friends met by appointment in a lofty grove of firs, commanding one of the highest points of ground in the neighbourhood; on which the late Sir Richard, in some enthusiastic fit of the picturesque soon after his marriage, had erected a Belvedere. The building, like most others merely ornamental, soon grew out of favour, and at length out of repair. Holiday people from the adjacent villages gradually defaced the walls, fractured the windows, and broke up the seats to light their kettles: till, on the accession of Sir Burford the first, Langdale Tower was nothing but a granite skeleton, good at most for shelter during a storm of rain; but still possessing certain attractions ineffacable by the mischief-loving hand of man, unconvertible to any vulgar purpose, incorruptible by the base uses of humanity.

The knoll on which the Belvedere was erected, commanded a vast sweep of country, rich with the finest features of a highly cultivated neighbourhood. The woods of Dronington Manor darkened the horizon; the modern elegance of Compton Park formed the middle distance of the landscape; the beautiful lake of Langdale and the winding stream by which it was fed lay at its base; and around the tower, tufted thickets interspersed with gorse and fern and heather, partly clothed and partly revealed the crags among which its foundations were laid. A murmuring multitude of bees prevented the solitary spot from seeming altogether lonely; and the spicy exhalations of the adjoining pine groves, basking in the searching fervour of the autumnal sunshine, seemed to justify their preference of so fragrant a spot.

Alicia and Mary had been sitting for nearly an hour among the ruins of the Belvedere, in refuge from the vivid brightness of the sky, discussing such topics as young ladies love to discuss;—new novels, new music, new works of fancy, old friends, old times, old ties, old claimants on their beneficence. They were trifling

away a summer hour in the happiest interchange of innocent nothings; while Jane, graceful and wild as one of the fawns which might be discerned at a distance frisking among the dotted thorn-bushes of Langdale Chase, amused herself in defiance of the fierceness of the atmosphere, by collecting the infinite variety of grasses and wild-flowers springing among the cliffs of the little glacis surrounding the tower. A shadow darkening the open door of the building suddenly arrested their discourse; and a young, a *very* young sportsman was seen hurrying past, followed by several dogs and a gamekeeper. He was precisely such a figure as ladies love to look on; and nothing could be more natural than that Miss Compton and Mary should exclaim at the same moment, "How very handsome!" The next minute a third person was added to their party; Jane, with her cheeks crimsoned and her breath panting, burst into the Belvedere.

"Jane has seen a ghost, or the illustrious stranger," exclaimed Alicia, laughing at her perturbation. "How is it, Fairy-foot;—did the young gentleman in the green jacket mistake you for the partridge—

> 'That cuddles close beside the brake
> Afraid to stay—afraid to fly?'

Have you run any risk from that fearful double-barrelled gun?"

"Do you know him?" exclaimed Jane.

"Him?—the gun?—My dear Jenny, a gun is always personified as of the feminine gender."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes, my dear! Or perhaps you mean the 'him' who seemed the proprietor of that dreadful implement of destruction?"

Jane's cheeks glowed of a still deeper red.

"It must be some person staying at Dronington Manor; for I know Sir Burford has given the Duke the disposal of his preserves during his absence," observed Mary Raymond.

"Perhaps so," said Alicia, listlessly; "and we must needs allow that his Grace is fortunate in a very handsome visiter. I do not know his name; but I noticed

him at Weymouth last week, flirting tremendously with that beautiful Miss Richmond."

"With my cousin Adela?"

"Very true,—with your cousin! I always forget your relationship, and recollect her only as the false goddess of your brother Henry's worship."

"Thank heaven he is cured of that infatuation," cried Mary. "Lady Germaine has sent poor Harry to Coventry."

"To make room for this young hunter of the woods, I conclude; for she was coquetting with him at a desperate rate. I forgot to ask his name and pretensions to so much graciousness."

"Mr. Orme inquired, but Lee and Kennedy could not inform him," observed Jane in a little hurried agitated manner.

"'The dog-star rages!'"—cried Alicia. "My dear Jane, what has your nabob or your gardener with a double name or double nature to do with the matter?—We were wrong to let you run about like a leveret among the fern. You have certainly had a *coup-de-soleil.*"

"Better that than a *coup-de-fusil,*" cried Jane Raymond, rallying her spirits, "which I thought was going to be my portion, when he stepped forward with his apology.

"He?"

"You must have seen him pass the door just now."

"*Him* again? I saw *two* men; the Duke of Dronington's keeper, and—"

"A young stranger, with his dogs and gun," said Jane, stoutly, piqued by Alicia's bantering, "whom I happened to meet one day last spring as I was assisting Mr. Orme to choose some flowers for mamma at the Hammersmith Nursery Grounds."

"*He* seems to have made a strong impression," observed Alicia, provokingly.

"And with reason," replied Jane; "for Mr. Orme was extremely displeased because he chanced to be walking through the conservatories at the same time with ourselves; and because, having very awkwardly thrown down and scattered a large bouquet, which the gardener was tying up for us, he very naturally addressed me to make an apology."

"I remember, now, that you mentioned the circumstance on our return," said Mary.

"'Very naturally,'—'chanced to be walking,'—Jane, Jane!—this mysterious unknown is certainly some disguised knight-errant of yours. I must make an investigation into the subject. Stay!—shall I write to Lady Caroline Ilderfield, or trust to the chance with which you say *he* is in league, to become his interpreter?"

"We will not trouble ourselves concerning him," interrupted Mary, in pity to the evident embarrassment of her sister. A friend of Adela Richmond is probably not worth an inquiry."

"Certainly not," echoed Jane, placing the bunch of flowers she had been collecting in her girdle, but secretly hoping that Alicia would be as good or as bad as her word.

The hero of the Belvedere was, however, very soon forgotten by the sisters in the hurry of two remarkable events which occurred a few days afterwards. The dunny vicar of Langdale departed this life, and was deposited among his predecessors, beneath the vestry over which he had so long presided; and, on the same day, Henry Raymond arrived to pass a week's leave with his family,—a week, a whole delightful week, divided between morning readings with Margaret in the library, afternoon rides in the greenwood with Mary, Jane, and their friend, Miss Compton; and evenings devoted to music and conversation with the united circle! What could afford a more charming relief to the dulness of a London October; a misty solitude, shared with a few Irish bricklayers and a great many barrows-full of green codlings!

The happiness derived from his presence among them was, in some measure, counteracted by the mournful event immediately preceding his arrival. Not that they, or any other human creature, experienced any thing like real affliction on occasion of Dr. Docket's decease, (a man who was found to have been hoarding for fifty years, the proceeds of his various benefices, for the satisfaction of adding a wing to the obscure college of which he was a fellow, to be called the Docket Wing,) but because they foresaw the installation of the Reve-

rend Doctor Fagg, and the consequent banishment of the Reverend Eliab Rubric, the curate who, for twenty years past, had presided over the wants of the poor, the faith of the wavering, the happiness of the whole parish. He had, in fact, laboured solely and abundantly in his vocation, with the exception of collecting its tithes. The tithes were for the dunny vicar, and the Docket wing; a salary of one hundred and fifteen pounds being deducted for the pittance of Eliab.

The Raymond girls, familiarized by their works of benevolence with the state of the parish,—and the good old dowager, instructed by painful parental experience in the temporal and spiritual doctrines of Dr. Fagg,—were naturally moved with commiseration towards the people of Langdale. But all discussion was useless. The living had long been promised to the tutor of Sir Burford, the *protegee* of the Duke of Dronington. Intelligence of the death of the incumbent was duly despatched to Bologna, where the Baronet and his shadow were residing; and they now began to expect the arrival of Nicodemus's small travelling valise and snug little person, to take possession of the Vicarage.

It was a doleful sight to Harry Raymond and his sisters to encounter poor Mrs. Rubric, or one of the curate's fine, hard, healthy-looking boys, in their daily walks, and reflect how soon they were likely to be ejected from the decent happy little tenement in which they had so long resided, and which they had so often rendered a stronghold of defence to their poorer brethren. The gaffers and gammers of Langdale trudged songless and discontented to work, pondering over the prospect of losing the comforter of their sickness, the strengthener of their hopes, the harbinger of their future compensation; and Rubric himself, in his rusty suit of curate's gray, was often seen scudding with the evening shadows along the meadows and coppices skirting the village, as if bidding farewell to the scene of his pastoral labours,—to the wilderness wherein he had so long folded his flock.

There is something humiliating, something painful, in the sight of a scholar,—a servant of the altar—a man with furrows on his brow, and the scars of fifty years of worldly suffering in his heart, driven forth like a

hireling to seek his bread;—bidden to resign all intercourse with those for whose sins he has offered up his intercessions to Heaven,—the shorn lamb he has sheltered in his bosom, the straggler he has recalled from the waste and the wayside to the fold of God! Rubric was too meek to complain, too proud to weep; but he looked at his children, and the walls in which they had been born to him, and which once, he trusted, would shelter them till the accomplishment of their maturity, in the silence of a deep-felt sorrow.

Poor Mrs. Rubric already began to count her moveables; to gather together her napery and the well-worn garments of her family; to wander round her tiny garden with a heart swelling mightily towards the gooseberry bushes that had so long furnished her parsonic wine-press, and the crooked quince tree overhanging the pond, that had supplied her annual marmalade. There was not a double daisy putting up its pert head along the oyster-shell border, which did not (as Wordsworth sings) inspire her with thoughts too deep for tears." She wandered from the little laundry to the little parlour, from the little parlour to the little kitchen; and gazed upon her washing tubs and saucepans, saying, as the Indian tribes, on retiring to the back settlements, ejaculated to the bones of their ancestors, "How can we say unto *you*, arise and follow us?" Every stir in the village, every rumbling of wheels in the direction of the Pig and Whistle,—the chief hostel of Langdale,—filled her with alarm. She lived in a perpetual presentiment of the advent of the Reverend Nicodemus Fagg.

One evening,—it was the very evening appointed for Henry Raymond's return to town,—a stirring October evening, when the autumnal winds speak with a loud voice among the branches, and the swirling eddies of crisp sere leaves smite sharply against the windows, and Rubric and his wife were sitting dejectedly beside their fire; she, occupied with that everlasting implement of the penurious housewife, a darning-needle; he, pondering with spectacles on nose over a folio Chrysostom, bequeathed him by the dunny Vicar, *not* "to smooth his band in," but as a handsome testimony of regard for twenty years' services. Both were silent, both sad.

But on a sudden Mrs. Rubric paused, with the ravelled muslin in one hand, and the "glittering forfex" in the other:—she heard a sound, a tumult, a rumbling of wheels. "'Tis the Doctor!" she faltered in a faint voice. "'Tis the Vicar!" responded her husband in a grave one; and rising with dignity he prepared, like Foscari the Doge, to look upon his successor.

When, lo! a tap louder than any the crackling leaves of the sycamores could produce, was heard at the parlour window; the garden door was burst open with mighty violence; and, rushing into the little chamber, there appeared—(no! not Nicodemus! we ask pardon for the interruption)—Harry Raymond and his three sisters; their fine eyes sparkling, their handsome cheeks glowing with the evening air, their white teeth appearing through smiles of uncontrollable gratulation.

"Margaret must read the letter,—Margaret is the cause of it all!" cried Jane, possessing herself of the epistle her brother was beginning to unfold, and placing it in her sister's hands. And, in a moment, the little party was seated, and Margaret, in a tremulous voice, reciting a pompous despatch from Sir Burford Raymond.

Pompous despatches, as is well known to the junior clerks of the foreign office, and junior *attaches* of foreign missions, are wofully dull of transcription; and it may, therefore, be desirable to pass over the expletives and parentheses of the learned Baronet, skip the long words, cut through the circumlocution, and arrive at the facts set forth in his protocol;—commas, colons, and semi-colons, would but perplex us. Besides, we have no inclination to render or admit the Baronet as ridiculous on *this* as on other occasions;—for the first time of his life he proved himself capable of a generous action!

The letter was to his mother; and regarded, in the first instance, her acceptance of an annuity for the porpose of bestowing on William Raymond a university education, with a view to his taking orders, should he be inclined to exchange a province between Bombay and Calcutta, for a rectory in the county of Dorset. If his inclinations were seen to tend towards the clerical estate, Langdale was to be his portion, with the an-

nexed condition of retaining Rubric, with a quadrupled salary, as curate for life; who was nominated to the absolute tenure of the living till William's ordination,—a period of, at least, six years to come. Thus much of the letter was all that concerned the Rubrics,—all that was read in the old glebe house,—all that caused the Curate's heart to sing for joy; all that impelled Mrs. R. to creep up to the nursery and cry over her children, as soon as the pony carriage drove away, and the four happy faces of the four happy Raymonds disappeared. But it was a point of delicacy much discussed and much approved among the sisters and brothers on their return homewards, that Sir Burford had expressly avoided acting as a benefactor on this occasion, and had left the whole agency of the affair with his mother: he seemed conscious that the Fulham family might experience some little hesitation at receiving a favour from his hands. There could be no doubt that he had benefited largely by Margaret's reprehensions; that the man was improving, the pedant humanizing: and that even in his benefactions he was chiefly anxious to give pleasure to the obdurate lady of his love. It was well done, therefore, on *his* part to spare her the embarrassment of obligation.

What a happy evening at Langdale-house was that which decided that William was not to be banished to India, nor the Rubrics from their village home!

CHAPTER VIII.

'Tis always with a moral end
That I dissert, like grace before a feast.
For like an aged aunt, or tiresome friend,
A rigid guardian, or a zealous priest,
My Muse by exhortation means to mend
All people, in all times, and in most places,
Which puts my Pegasus to these grave paces.

BYRON.

TIME passed on;—and that portion of the year which in the country we call spring and in London the season, shone once more upon the earth. Adela Richmond re-commenced her course of gaieties, less pretty but more beautiful than ever,—less admired, but a thousand times more talked of. Lady Germaine now began to think it necessary to plant herself on higher and more ostensible ground. She took care that her daughter's portrait should adorn the walls of Somerset House, and her name be included among those of the beauties noticed by the Court Circular at the Drawing Room. Banishing all remembrance of Sir Burford and her past mortifications, she resolved that Adela's fourth season should crown her career with bridal orange-blossom.

And in what, may we venture to inquire, consisted the "course of gaiety" apparently so warmly appreciated by both mother and daughter;—what were their habits, their occupations, their means and measure of enjoyment? To rail for the first four months of the season at the dulness and emptiness of town;—to fume, fret, and scold for the four ensuing, at balls, or rumours of balls, from which they fancied themselves designedly omitted;—to grumble during the bright days of June at the multiplicity and incompatibility of their engagements;—and amid the fading pleasures of July, to grasp

at every dying flower till its leaves were crushed,—to redouble every effort, every matrimonial manœuvre, till disappointment became disgrace.

Nor were the minor cares and occupations of Adela more edifying or more satisfactory. Up till daylight, morning after morning, yet ever hurried away from the ball-room in "the sweet o' the night," lest the gray twilight should prove a dangerous visitation, a revealer of defeatures, a beacon-light to the unwary;—chained to a mid-day couch, day after day, by headach and the apprehension not of personal fatigue, but of a care-worn countenance;—all the labours of beauty,—all the cares of designing, ordering, inspecting and altering, ball dress after ball dress;—all the dread of being surpassed by the addition of a flounce, feather, or spangle, by some mischievous rival;—all the apprehension of appearing either before or behind the fashion,—of offending Lady This by copying some irresistible peculiarity of her costume, or Lady That by flying into a contrary extreme;—all the peevish, trivial, selfish, contemptible vexations and toils of a mere woman of the world, were already gathering round her young head! To attract, to enslave, to form a good connexion, occupied every thought of this immortal and responsible being.

At all events her exertions were crowned with success. Adela,—"the lovely Adela Richmond,"—"the fascinating Adela Richmond,"—afforded a theme for universal panegyric. *Whose* eyes were half so blue,—*whose* teeth half so pearly,—*whose* tresses half so redundant? Fair, gracious, piquante, many a prudent father trembled when he saw the fashionable flirt resting upon the arm of his son; many a gentle mother grew uneasy on beholding the worldly-wise beauty engaged in conversation with her daughter. Still, there were enough of the inexperienced, the vain, the hollow, and the frivolous, to applaud, worship, sigh, tremble,—do every thing but seek to make the varnished toy their own.

Among those persons who looked at Lady Germaine and her daughter with an unloving eye, was old Orme. He had once or twice crossed their path on occasion of their visits to Fulham; and would just as soon have seen a snake coiling at his feet as either parent or child. Re-

garding them as hard-hearted, hollow-minded, cold-blooded animals, coming forth among mankind to look for prey,—he shuddered when he thought of the elderly woman creeping to her grave in her rouge and perfumes and pearl-powder; and still more of the girl, (*the girl* whose mind should have been as spotless as the white rose half opened to the early sun, and bright as that sun's meridian beam) plotting, caballing, and apparelling herself in meretricious allurements.—"I met that wriggling worm, Lady Germaine, as I was coming hither,"—was with him an invariable prelude to ill-humour for the remainder of the day.

Rupert had, however, a newer subject for dissatisfaction in Sir Burford's interference in the destinies of his protegée, little Willie. He had long looked upon the boy as his own, and his fortune as the boy's. He, who had traversed the immense ocean, and dwelt some five-and-twenty years in a strange country, thought very differently from Mrs. Raymond, on the subject of sea-voyages and foreign banishment. Having had little to forsake worthy regret at Barleyholme, with its nine wooden skittles of human growth, he could not enter into the sorrows of absence from an affectionate and gentle family. Great as was his love for the orphan, he loved him after the selfish fashion of mortal nature. He chose that his heir should do as he had done, live as he had lived, see all he had seen; that he should dwell among swarthy brows, become addicted to the Hookah, and learn the flavour of kill-johns and manguasteens. It was never his intention that William Raymond should remain *long* in India; but he felt satisfied that he should love his protegée the better with a complexion somewhat jaundiced, and a coat redolent of camphor-wood.

And then he hated what he was pleased to call "a parson!"—Driven from England in inexperienced boyhood, the chaplains of the presidency did not inspire him with an advantageous opinion of the clerical profession. Heber—the Apostle of modern Christendom—was not of his day; he knew nothing of such men as Rubric; and rashly concluded that Willie, in taking orders, would become a mere tithe-gatherer—a Sunday automaton mechanizing the duties of a preacher of the Word. The old man could not bear to think of it; and

very decidedly informed Mrs. Raymond that he should have nothing farther to say to the Rector of Langdale. Perplexed by the alternative thus presented, and anxious only to fulfil her duty to her son, she left the option to himself; when William, secretly desirous to second the preference of his mother, after a consultation with Charles and Henry, who declined advising on a point connected with their own interests, addressed himself to Remington Compton, who pronounced without hesitation in favour of the University and Langdale Rectory. Nothing could be more natural.—Lord Soho's son, who was daily and hourly gathering laurels in the metropolis, courted among its intellectual circles, and cheered by its brilliant promises of fame and prosperity, was little likely to advocate the precarious fortunes of a baneful climate, or the moral extinction of banishment to the interior of India, when opposed to a handsome competence in the land of liberty, love and enlightenment. He was precisely the sort of man who regards a metropolis as the only arena worthy to animate human exertions.

After kissing the withered hand of old Rupert for the last time, William Orme accordingly took his departure for Trinity; and very soon after his instalment, his letters to Henry, Charles, and his sisters, were copiously illuminated with illusions to the wild feats, college triumphs, and personal attractions of their cousin Lord Germaine;—a young scapegrace on the eve of his majority, whom no one ever mentioned without a frown upon their brow and a smile upon their lips. By William's account, the future head of the house of Richmond was the finest fellow in the world,—all joy, sunshine, and impulse; seldom out of a scrape, and never out of humour; seldom with a shilling to pay his debts —never without a guinea to bestow on the misfortunes of the poor.

On occasion of the first visit paid by Adela to "those Raymonds," after William's inauguration at Cambridge, (but no! they were not "those," they were only "*the* Raymonds" now) she was completely puzzled by the numerous inquiries addressed to her by Mary, touching their noble kinsman; his looks, his temper, his character, nay! even those of his guardian Sir Clau-

dius Veerham, seemed to have become matters of interest at Fulham. It was really very impertinent in such people to trouble themselves about the matter! What was Lord Germaine to them? He was never likely to move in *their* circles or seek *their* acquaintance; and it was nothing to the purpose that he happened to breathe the same atmosphere with that stupid little dormouse her aunt Raymond's pet, the future parson of Langdale.

Adela replied to their questions as discouragingly as possible. "She had *seen* Lord Germaine, and thought him tolerably good-looking; very *young* in his manners and ideas; and frisky and awkward as a greyhound puppy. He was going to leave college, she understood, and might improve; but, at present, he had very little to recommend him."

Who would have guessed, who would have *dreamed*, from the tone employed by Miss Richmond in this definition of her cousin's character, that it had long been decided between Lady Germaine and herself, (should she be still unmarried on his coming of age,) to make him theirs for ever?—Or that, as the fatal period was nearly at hand, and her manœuvres in the art of matchmaking wholly infructuous, she was intent only upon seizing on her victim previously to his appearance in general society, that she might strike home, forestall all other impressions, and entangle him in a premature engagement!

Sir Claudius Veerham was a city knight, selected by the late Hon. Charles Richmond as his executor and trustee to his son, without any expectation that the title would so soon, or even eventually devolve to his line; and Lady Germaine had calculated too successfully on the vanity of the guardian, and his anxiety to propitiate her notice, to be at all doubtful of his co-operation in securing the marriage.

From the period of her husband's death she had, in fact, never lost sight of the necessity of forming a close alliance with his successor. Whether as the head of the house, or the future dispenser of her own jointure, she regarded the little petticoated peer as a most important personage; and no sooner had she consulted her own interests by turning little Harry Raymond out of

doors, than she exerted herself to the utmost to make her little lordly nephew her inmate in his room. But Sir Claudius, however courteous and pliant, judged it his duty to keep the boy under his own roof; and the utmost concession he could be persuaded to grant to the tenderest of aunts was to lend her Lord Germaine, now and then, for a week; to be made sick with plum-cake, and sorry with the contentions invariably ensuing between himself and the peevish pretty little Adela, who was just advanced three years in age and tyranny beyond himself.

Mean while the epoch of birch and Latin grammar arrived; and his little lordship found the visits of Lady Germaine's sweetmeat-laden carriage to his preparatory house of industry at Parson's Green, quite as delightful as her foresight could desire. Yet, some how or other, aunt Germaine and the ipecacuanha of Dr. Cerate the apothecary became inextricably associated in his reminiscences; and even afterwards, during his Eton vacations, her ladyship's private supply of pocket-money to the young spendthrift was sure to produce some misadventure, in the shape of a broken cabriolet or broken collar-bone, an expedition to Epsom-races, a police-row, or a night in the watch-house. Do what she would, her indulgence to her nephew became a constant source of vexation to him:—his better angel seemed to delight in scattering bitterness among the sweets of her bestowing.

But what reminiscence of emetics or broken cabriolets, what shadow of past annoyances, could overpower the glow of delight and wonder with which the matured eye of Lord Germaine rested on the loveliness of his beautiful cousin; a cousin who devoted all her smiles, all her affections to himself; who welcomed him so sweetly in his skulks from Cambridge to town; and triumphed so feelingly in the success of his petty warfare against Sir Claudius Veerham of Mincing Lane!—Gracious and animated with all the world, Adela assumed an air of tender protection, of girlish playfulness in the presence of the young Cherubino who seemed to attach himself so fondly to her side. She presented him to all the frequenters of her mother's house; bespoke for him the favourable acceptance of

society, echoed his bon-mots, applauded his indiscretions. "Germaine was so young;—Germaine was so handsome;—Germaine was such a clever creature, such a good creature!" No wonder she could scarcely be persuaded to suffer him out of her sight.

Under these circumstances, Miss Richmond could not but regret that William Raymond should happen to settle at Trinity six weeks before the close of Lord Germaine's last term. But there was no great harm done. The boy was too tame and insignificant to obtain any permanent influence over her madcap cousin; and on the whole it was far more vexatious to her that she could not manage to inspire Germaine with a taste for balls or a genius for dancing; and that nothing would induce him to make his appearance (where it is so much the duty of young lordlings to make their appearance) in the Hall of Eblis, that paradise of earthly Peris, that scene of bliss and bale, the rooms of Willis! No persuasion of hers could induce him to convert himself into a spinning-top; or labour through those severe Terpsichorean exercises which provoked the Indian Rajah to inquire of a dancing English Duke, "Why does not your Highness get your servants to do this for you, as is our custom in the East?"

But with very little hope of obtaining him as her partner for a quadrille, Miss Richmond entertained none of securing him as her partner for life.—He was accustomed to gaze upon her with a smile of such intense admiration: to be her escort in the ride with such a triumphant sympathy in her noble horsewomanship. There only remained seven months of his minority: at the expiration of which Lord Germaine would doubtless propose, and Adela's projects be fully realized. Lady Germaine occasionally hinted to her nephew, that he was at least free to anticipate the event by a solemn betrothment; but either his extreme youth blinded him to the graciousness of her intentions, or he was unwilling to shackle his fair cousin.

Adela, however, seemed determined to regard the connexion in as serious and religious a point of view as if already consecrated by a plighted vow. She gave up flirting, forsook the lists of coquetry, no longer waltzed, no longer whispered in doorways, no longer

lingered in half-deserted ball-rooms when mamma and the chaperons were gone down to supper; no longer loitered on Lord Augustus's arm, hunting for a boa which they had themselves carefully hidden under a Skiddaw of shawls and cloaks; no longer found herself intercepted by the crowd, when following Lady Germaine, in company with Henry Raymond, along the colonnade of the chair-door at the opera. She knew Germaine to be very quick-sighted in such matters; and conceived it her best policy to sacrifice every darling folly and flirtation for his sake, or the sake of his coronet and estates. Sir Claudius Veerham was probably aware of all that was going on; and either considered the connexion a satisfactory one for his ward, or that his own interference between an aunt and a nephew was unjustifiable: for he said and did nothing to forward or retard the affair.

Many are the votaries of superstition even among the witty and the wise (with Byron as a brilliant leader of the list,) who despond over transactions effected on a Friday. For our own part, we are satisfied that the year has its unlucky month as well as the week its unlucky day; and that a larger proportion of fashionable tears is wept during the month of August, than during any other thirty-one of the three hundred and sixty-five days of annual sorrow. August is a sort of harsh equator, dividing the trifler's year into grave and gay, lively and severe, pleasure and penance; it interposes a moral ha-ha between the ornate lawn of the London season, and the wilder prospects of the year, to overleap which is an exertion that startles all human beings into sobriety.

August!—thou fearful epoch, when persons who have been living for the preceding hundred days without being many hundred minutes apart, must bid a hasty adieu with the certainty of eight months of tedious absence; when hearts which have been for weeks on the eve of interchanging their tender afflictions, are suddenly chilled into prudence by the consciousness that half a step more must be decisive,—while others who have maintained a cautious silence during the season, are moved to a rash explanation at the moment of parting such as renders that parting final:—August!—when the

young sportsman, labouring prematurely in his vocation, passes the morning in pilgrimages from the arsenal of Purdey to that of Nock, of Nock to Manton,—his head charged with a copper cap, his heart quick of ignition as battle powder; and when the anxious dowager, foiled in her campaign, retreats from the field with her baggage, opprobriating the cause she has been unable to render triumphant. August:—thou month of grouse and grumblings; of moors and moroseness,—how cruelly dost thou disenchant the dream of the fashionable visionary, while teaching wisdom to the idler, and folly to the wise!

From the earliest day of the month in question, from the first morning on which she noticed the sunshine turning red and the leaves turning brown in the groves of Hyde Park, poor Lady Germaine found herself extremely perplexed whither to direct her autumnal tour. Like most other dowagers destitute of a country seat, she possessed a reasonable number of convenient friends who were fond of illuminating the dulness of their retirement with the lovely smiles of Adela Richmond, and the lively, chatty, conformability of Lady Germaine, who was never so agreeable as when living at other people's expense. But to such places it would have been impossible to allure her pleasure-loving nephew. The very mention of her own mother's beautiful country-house, would have sufficed to send him ptarmigan shooting to Norway; and she found it difficult by any effort of art, science, or nature, to extract an acknowledgment of his preference for any particular bathing-place. She had already managed to make him bear her company at different times to Brighton, Ramsgate, Weymouth; but he had shown himself dissatisfied with all three, and could not be induced to say more at present, than that "Hastings was very green and pretty"—("Well, my dear Germaine; I am just thinking of taking Adela there for change of air!")—"but very dull; and that the Isle of Wight was a charming place"—("It would be very easy for us all to go to Cowes for a month or two.")—"but that nothing but a flounder or a wherryman could put up with the mud." In short, she was in a horrible dilemma. It was impossible to remain longer in London without be-

coming particular; and still more impossible to move without having secured her nephew's attendance. But Lord Germaine was already so much occupied with his percussions and flints, his rifles and double-barrels, that she began to fear there was no probability of intercepting his engagements to the preserves of my Lord this, and the Duke of the other, by a matrimonial engagement with her daughter. Nothing could be plainer than that Adela must give way to the partridges and pheasants; for already he was growing far less constant in his attendance, and had almost deserted her house. At this crisis, in the midst of her fretfulness, flurry, and disappointment, she received a mysterious letter from Sir Claudius Veerham.—With a trembling voice she read as follows:—

CHAPTER IX.

I would have thee engage in wedlock, not for the love of beauty, but for the love and protection of merit: for a companion to help thee through thy cares, and worthily and holily breed up thy children.

PETRARCH'S *Treatise on the Vanities of Life.*

"TO THE DOWAGER LADY GERMAINE."

"*Mincing Lane, August* 10—28."

"DEAR MADAM,

"Satisfied as I am that your ladyship will agree with me in thinking that, under the present existing circumstances, that nothing could be more disadvantageous to my beloved ward, than any thing like a *precipitate matrimonial engagement*, I—" (Rigmarole!—why can't the *man* come to the point?—"I am under the necessity of troubling your ladyship with a few lines less in justification of my own conduct, than in explanation of the very *underhand and*——" (What can he mean?)—"*unhandsome treatment practised against me by all*

parties." (Unhandsome, indeed! if he had exerted the vigilance necessary with a lad of Germaine's age, he would have been acquainted with the whole progress of the affair.")

"Finding, in short, that it was his lordship's intentions to follow up his attachment to his fair cousin by immediate proposals of marriage, I have judged it expedient to interfere; and *by the authority vested in me by the will of my friend, his late father*, have already despatched his lordship to the continent under the care of the reverend gentleman who has presided over the latter years of his education; with an understanding that if he consents to postpone the completion of his views until his coming of age, *no obstacle shall be raised on my part to retard the accomplishment of his wishes.* In order to prevent any correspondence between the young people, such as might tend to the disarrangement of my plans, I have obtained from his lordship a promise that no letter shall pass between himself and his relatives till the attainment of his majority; *an event which will occur in February next*, and secure me from all implication in the affair.

"Trusting that my *forbearance* and *delicacy* on the occasion will be honoured with your ladyship's approval,

"I have the honour to subscribe myself,
"Dear madam,
"Your ladyship's devoted
"Obedient humble servant,
"CLAUDIUS VEERHAM."

Lady Germaine's indignation was too big for words; and Adela's beautiful cheek became flushed with a crimson stain of suppressed rage. That a guardian who had remained so long supine, should suddenly rouse himself from his lethargy to perpetrate so vile an act of despotism, was really too provoking!

"I told you how it would be!" cried the mother.—"I told you the other night, when you chose to let Germaine sit whispering to you the whole evening at the opera, that I suspected the vulgar old woman opposite, in the blue turban, was Lady Veerham; but you would not be warned by me."

"I had already been warned by Germaine; he informed me from the first that it *was* Lady Veerham; we both knew it. But Sir Claudius never expressed the slightest objection to my cousin's visits here; and I thought it unnecessary to disguise the state of the case."

"And a pretty state you have brought it to at last!"

"I think it shows a great want of spirit on the part of Germaine, to submit to being sent abroad like a school boy. Why could he not stay and defy Sir Claudius; or why not, at least, take measures to acquaint us with his route, that we might write to him or follow him?"—

"Follow him!" reiterated Lady Germaine, and in so vehement a tone, that Adela fancied she was going to resent the ignominious proposal. "Follow him!—the very thing—We have nothing in the world to do with ourselves; let us go to Paris, which is the starting-post for all foreign countries. We shall be sure to find out at the Embassy whether my nephew has been there, and where he was going; and even if we do not trace him out, as we have nothing to amuse us till February next, we may just as well be in Paris as elsewhere. I shall get my *partie* every evening all the autumn; and if I can persuade your guardian to advance us a little money before we go, you can be getting your *trousseau* together to be ready for the event."

"Very true, mamma;—do let us be off as soon as possible. I am heartily sick of London. Living such a life of penance and privation as I have done for the last four months, Paris will appear delightful."

"Paris is always delightful," replied the mother, sententiously; "it is the only place in the world where one can live without troubling one's self with thinking and feeling."

And to Paris they went; but the effort was crowned with no success in its main object. Lord Germaine had neither been seen nor heard of! It was plain that the measures of Sir Claudius were very artfully taken; and nothing remained but to tame down their impatience for an event which was to free them mutually of each other, at the end of the shooting season and of his

young lordship's minority,—the fatal month of February.

Mean while, Adela, aware that the Parisian, unlike the British metropolis, gives no encouragement to printed details of balls, or newspaper panegyrics on the dancing of Lady Eleanor, or the singing of Lady Mary, felt that she was secure from being betrayed to her cousin as the brightest ornament of all the autumnal breakfasts, all the early winter balls. She therefore re-commenced with eagerness her career of dancing and flirting, particularly at those mansions of the French nobility where the English residents are less generally admitted; and soon consoled herself for Lord Germaine's absence by the adoration of a host of barons, counts, and chevaliers. Her fair Saxon beauty attracted universal admiration; and she continued to make herself happy in the day's enjoyment without reckoning much on the morrow. She was no longer looking out for a match. She knew that the second week in February would crown her experiment; and as Germaine might possibly prove as tenacious and *exigeant* as matrimony usually renders his countrymen, she felt that she was acting most judiciously and fairly towards herself, in making the most of the intervening time.

Mean while, the little party at Fulham, after enjoying a happy winter, which tended to enhance the promise of many happy summers, was preparing for a festival of considerable importance;—the solemnization of its first marriage. The least beautiful of the sisters was the first to invest herself in the matron duties of a wife. Margaret, the pearl of price, who from the superiority and peculiar nature of her endowments, might have been predicted as the last to meet with a suitable alliance, had been fortunate in securing the attachment of the man of all England most capable of appreciating the powers of her mind, without being inclined to overlook those less ostensible but better gifts, her gentle temper and feminine humility. Mr. Compton honoured while he loved her, and still maintained above herself that intellectual supremacy indispensable to the happiness of a married life; while Margaret Raymond's preference, which had been excited in the first instance by

admiration of her lover's genius and literary distinction, was soon lost in strong personal attachment, and the contemplation of that hallowed bond which is superior to the mere vanities of life.

Nor was she less fortunate in the character of her husband's family than in his own. The Sohos were people recently ennobled, and so imperfectly established in their new honours, that they still regarded literary distinction as a means of redeeming personal obscurity. Instead of feeling shocked and disgusted by the idea of connecting themselves with "an authoress," (as would probably have been the case with a tribe of five hundred years of aristocratic duncehood,) they were as much pleased with Miss Raymond for commanding a certain portion of the attention of society, as for her power of connecting them with two ancient names, such as those of Richmond and Raymond. On similar principles of ambition they had urged their son into the prominence of a public career; and would have been far less disposed to facilitate his union with one of the Miss Dechiminis, with a portion of twenty thousand pounds, than with the daughter of an honourable Mrs. Raymond, boasting no dowry beyond a name, that was capable of collecting a crowd round the door of any ball-room in London.

During the intimacy between the families produced by their long visit to Langdale, Lord Soho, moved by the excellent domestic qualities he discovered in the object of Remington's choice, facilitated their marriage by a handsome settlement and the gift of a comfortable residence in the neighbourhood of St. James's Park; exacting only in return, that his son should relax neither his parliamentary nor professional exertions in the indolence of a married life. Next to his new coronet, there was nothing on earth he prized so highly as the public honours attained by his future representative; and in the full persuasion that the chances of time and tide would place the future Lord Soho on the woolsack, or involve him in public duties of equal importance, he was delighted to behold his favourite son settled in life and secured from the seductions of London gaiety, by an alliance with one so worthy to be the companion of his retirement as Margaret Raymond. He welcomed

her into his family with all the partiality and eagerness her sensitive delicacy could desire.

It is possible that his lordship's disinterestedness of conduct on the occasion, might in some degree tend to rouse the spirit of old Rupert Orme, who had hitherto been so remiss in giving tangible proofs of his favour to the girl whom, in his heart, he loved beyond the rest of the family, and in his soul reverenced beyond the rest of the world. She was the only woman, the only lady, he had ever known whose accomplishments were susceptible of conversion into the currency of the realm. He thought her less useless than the more showy portion of her sex; and had some satisfaction in presenting his young friend Compton with ten thousand pounds, as the marriage portion of one who had laboured diligently to increase the scanty revenues of her family. It was, however, no surprise to the old man, to find that a handsome share of the gift was set apart by the bridegroom for the benefit of her mother and sisters.

But of all the persons present on the joyous occasion of Margaret's hymenæals, who so happy, who so proud, as her brother Henry? He, who had so tenderly watched over her feeble health, at a period when no peculiar distinctions invested her with a degree of importance superior to the charm attending the extreme beauty of his elder and younger sister;—he, who had loved her so tenderly, so vigilantly, while Rupert Orme was still wandering among the mango-groves, and Remington Compton plodding away amid the dust and parchments of Lincoln's Inn;—he, who had maintained her dignity against the sneers levelled by Adela and Lady Germaine as literary ladies, and applauded her rejection of the brilliant overtures of Sir Burford the Great;—he bestowed her upon his friend at the altar with all the heartfelt fervour of a father—all the exulting tenderness of the happiest of brothers. Alicia Compton could hardly conceal her sympathy in his honest pride—his genial warmth of feeling.

While Lady Germaine and Adela were luxuriating in the inebriations of the carnival, intoxicated or mad with those fermenting fumes of vanity which bewilder the coteries of Paris previously to the *amende honorable* of a Lenten repentance, the Honourable Mrs. Comp-

ton took possession of a handsome mansion in Spring Gardens, happy in the affection of a husband who had no objection to her seeing as much of "those Raymonds" as she pleased; and who neither affected nor felt any peculiar horror on perceiving that the facilities thus afforded to a more intimate friendship between his own sister and the brother of his bride, had the singular effect of rendering the giddy Alicia grave—the sentimental Harry, a rattler. He was not blind to the fact that they were falling in love, with the headlong obstinacy that sometimes attends the growth of that amiable passion, with both the wise and foolish; but after having warned the young guardsman that his sister had nothing to depend on beyond the shallow settlement provided for one of six younger children, and reminded Alicia that she had been too long accustomed to the ostentations of life to limit her inclinations to a barrack-room and the precedency of a subaltern's wife, he conceived that he had done his duty. Perhaps, the discerning Remington was aware that his predication had been rendered superfluous by the previous influence of those daily walks among the Langdale woods, and daily rides among the Langdale lanes, which had increased the measure of Alicia's sighs, and animated the mirth of Henry. Perhaps, he was aware that they were already desperately in love; and having neither Puck nor Ariel at command, did not attempt to "put a girdle round about the earth," or to dam up the flow of the Ganges, or to arrest the progress of a tender passion between a pair of weak-headed, strong-hearted young persons, who had been sentimentalizing together among the groves and the nightingales, in all the charming bewilderment of knowing they had not a twig whereon to build a nest for the turtle dove ship of their own unprosperous destinies.

During the latter weeks of Margaret's courtship, from the period when Lord Soho had come forward so liberally in favour of the establishment of his son, it was frequently raised as a question of some interest in the Fulham circle, whether Sir Burford ought to be formally apprized of the approaching event; or whether it might not be unwise to irritate him by an announcement so fatal to his own projects of happiness; and it

was finally resolved by Mary, who had seen most of their cousin, and, therefore, liked him least of the family, that his pretensions to Margaret's hand having arisen merely from the vanities of her literary success, he was very little to be pitied for his disappointment. Had it not been for Mrs. Raymond's grateful recollection of his interference in favour of her darling Willie, he might have been left to the disrespect of learning this important family event through the medium of Galignani's Messenger, or of an inconclusive epistle from his mother, which contained the following hint:—

"Yours, my dear Burford, came *safe* to hand, and glad to learn of your rheumatism. My rug is come back finished last Saturday was a fortnight, and now made up from town, looking *very rich* and *comfortable*, with our good neighbour Soho's son Remington's wedding cake. *All* much pleased with Margaret. Mr. Orme's *generosity* being the universal theme. Mr. Rubric writes by this post; so will only conclude from

Your affectionate mother,

DOROTHY RAYMOND."

But Mrs. Raymond thought it necessary to communicate the event in a more detailed manner to the son of her benefactor, Sir Richard—to the benefactor of her own son William; and after bestowing prodigious pains and consideration on the composition of a despatch addressed to so critical an eye as that of the pupil of the Rev. Dr. Fagg, she put him in possession of all the circumstantialities of the case.

It is probable that the acquisition proved unacceptable—for not one syllable did the baronet vouchsafe in return; although on one point of her communication,—a point intimately connected with the interests of another member of her little family,—she had judged it advisable to solicit his advice and opinion. He had either become indifferent to the matter, or was offended past conciliation; and Mrs. Compton was seriously distressed to perceive, on Henry's account, that the former feuds between Langdale and Fulham were likely to be renewed, and that her brother must give up all chance of succeeding at some future time to the estates of his family. The prospect did not, however, avail

to damp the courage of the pretty Alicia, who expressed herself perfectly content with Mapleton and its four hundred per annum, the reversion of which was already settled on the young guardsman. They would then be able to make up between them nearly eight hundred a-year!—Eight hundred a-year, and a cottage in Kent!—What could exceed the delights of such a prospect? The young couple already looked confidently forward to a life of honey-moon and elegant economy.

CHAPTER X.

When I consider the false impressions which are received by the generality of the world, I am troubled at none more than a certain levity of thought, which many young women of quality have entertained, to the hazard of their characters, and the certain misfortune of their lives.

STEELE.

It excited no little surprise among those higher circles of the French nobility in which Lady Germaine and her daughter were passing the winter, to observe the perfect independence of tone and action assumed by the beautiful Adela. They, who were habituated to the sight of the mute damsels with downcast eyes and mechanical docility, who constitute and represent the spinster estate in France, were amazed to find a girl, an unemancipated girl, invested in the splendours of attire and levities of speech and demeanour, characteristic of the married Frenchwoman. Many inquired if she were not a widow; and all, while they worshipped her beauty and applauded her sallies, agreed that she must have renounced every prospect of matrimony, and made up her mind to retain her independence for life. They could not conceive it possible that attractions of such a nature were put forward to engage any man in his senses to make her the mother of his children, the companion of his fire-side. "Since she already assumes such liberty of conscience," cried the young Duc de Villeroi, "what will she be when marriage renders her

her own mistress?—what will she be as a wife?—*Dieu m'en preserve.*"

But even had Adela been aware of the opinions thus frequently expressed, and the still severer ones which remained unspoken, the tenor of her conduct would have been unchanged. She regarded herself as beyond the influence of public opinion, as tacitly affianced to a young nobleman of considerable property, and, therefore, privileged to defy the prejudices of society.

"*Que voulez vous?*" she exclaimed to her giddy friend, the Marchioness of Girastolle; "you say it is the custom in Paris for none but married women to flirt in a ball-room, or a ride in the Bois de Boulogne. In England, *we* girls are the favoured order. How can you blame me for insisting, so long as I am able, on the privileges of *my caste?*—depend on it I will not neglect those of yours, as soon as I am entitled to exercise them. After all, London is the place for Mademoiselle,—Paris for Madame."—

"Were you one of us, *mu belle Adele*, you would run some risk of never becoming Madame!" cried the Marchioness pettishly; and Miss Richmond attributing her remonstrance to the vexation of finding her privileges encroached on by a stranger, determined to persist in the career so consonant with her own inclinations. Lady Germaine, in all the hurry of her *ecarte*, and her anxiety to see her apartments crowded by a weekly reunion of the *distingues* of Paris, was either unobservant of the astonishment excited by her daughter's freedom of action, or indifferent to the indiscretion which she considered a main source of their popularity. She knew that Adela was guiltless of any thing "really wrong;" and had no notion of subjecting herself to the absurd customs and prejudices of any foreign country.

Mean while, the portentous month of February drew near;—when, one night, on ascending the illuminated staircase of the château to a ball given by the Duchesse de Berri, they were met by Lord Augustus Cecil, an intimate friend of the noble minor, whose arm Lady Germaine caught in passing, that she might assail him with a few hurried interrogations concerning her nephew. But his lordship, who was flying off in attendance on the beautiful Lady Avenmore (who was going

away overcome by the heat of the ball-room, or the presence of a sister of her lord, said to exercise a very jealous scrutiny over her movements) could not be detained. He promised to call the next day at Lady Germaine's hotel; but even his brief intelligence that he had "only just quitted his friend Germaine," excited Adela's curiosity and interest to so high a pitch, that for the first time she forgot to exult in the triumph of finding herself the prettiest woman, and the best dressed English woman in the circle of Madame; for the first time the reserve and tranquillity of her demeanour ensured the approbation of the assembly.

But the following morning brought no Lord Augustus. Lady Germaine, after pacing her gorgeous saloon for three anxious hours, despatched her chasseur to the Hotel Castiglione; and instead of seeing him return, followed by the truant dandy, had the mortification to receive the following billet, left by his lordship to be delivered to her after his departure for England!

"Dear Lady Germaine,

"I am off to Calais,—and am, therefore, under the necessity of apologizing for the impossibility of waiting upon you according to my engagement. Let me, however, fulfil the most important purpose of my intended visit, by informing you that I quitted Germaine a fortnight ago at Naples, on the point of beginning his journey homewards. He is in high spirits, but growing a bore; for he thinks and dreams, and, of course, talks only of the enfranchisement of his approaching majority, and the delight of renouncing his freedom by an immediate marriage with his beautiful cousin.—I never saw a fellow so miserably in love.—I should imagine he would be at Paris in ten days.

"Your ladyship's

"Most obedient servant,

"A. C."

"Well, my dear mamma," cried Adela, who had been watching Lady Germaine's perusal of the portentous billet; but unable to decipher through the mask of her ladyship's cosmetics, the effect produced on her countenance by Lord Augustus's intelligence: "What

news of poor Augustus?—Has Lady Avenmore reduced him to the desperation of drowning himself in Curaçoa; or what has become of him this morning?"

"Augustus!" cried Lady Germaine, laying down the billet with an air of contemptuous vexation; "What on earth is Lord Augustus to you?"——

"Not much certainly!—yet I don't think I should have hurried Madame Deschamps so violently for my new pelisse, had I not fancied he was coming here to-day. Lord Augustus is the only Englishman I ever knew on whom the advantages of a pretty dress were not thrown away. He has almost as much imagination as Herbault."

"Well, then," exclaimed Lady Germaine, unable to repress her satisfaction at the information imparted by Lord Augustus sufficiently to chide, as it deserved, the flippancy of her daughter, "you cannot do better than write and consult him about your *trousseau;* for it appears that Germaine's impatience will leave you very little leisure, after his arrival, to make your preparations."

"Preparations?" cried Adela, eagerly snatching the letter, and perusing it with glowing cheeks, and affecting an air of unconcern as soon as she found that all was safe.

"I really wish Lord Augustus had managed to bring us this news himself," said she, with nonchalance, returning the billet to her mother. "I should like to have learned from him by what art old Veerham contrived to kidnap my cousin, and prevent him from corresponding with us. There is something very mysteous about it."

"Have patience, and Germaine will explain the whole affair. He will be here, you see, in less than a fortnight; and as the period of my *location* will expire by that time, I shall propose our immediate departure for England."

The ten days intervening between Lord Augustus and Lady Avenmore's departure and this anxiously expected event, would have been unspeakably tedious both to Adela and her mother, had they not managed to fix their attention on the various purchases which Lady Germaine judged it prudent to effect in Paris, in order

to economize the expenditure indispensable for the wedding clothes of a vicountess. Day after day, the triflers were engrossed by the task of selecting laces, measuring cambric, examining embroidery; and any one less complacently self-disposed than Adela Richmond, might have become weary of contemplating her own blue eyes in the glass, and of trying on hats, bonnets, toques, berets, and a thousand other fripperies, elevated into importance by those magniloquent titles by which the Parisians contrive to impart dignity to a shaving-brush, or a patent corkscrew. Yet every evening found her unabated in ardour to increase her store of treasures; and, but for the limitation of Lady Germaine's jointure and generosity, it is probable that not a novelty-shop from the Rue Vivienne to the Isle St. Louis, would have been left unexplored by the restless vanity of the bride-expectant.

At length the ten days specified by Lord Augustus Cecil were brought to a close; Lady Germaine deposited especial instructions at the Hotel of the British Embassy that intelligence of her nephew's arrival should instantly be forwarded to herself; and was even at the trouble of bribing the municipal officer stationed at the Barrière d'Italie, to take charge of her card of address, and deliver it to the first English Milor bearing the same name, whose travelling carriage and passport should present themselves to his recognisance. At the end of the fortnight, when every day, every hour, every minute, threatened to produce the happy crisis, she would no longer quit the house lest they should miss the hour of Lord Germaine's arrival; and every evening a dinner consisting of his favourite dishes was served up to the two disconsolate ladies. No invitations were accepted, no invitations given, lest they should interfere with the first meeting between the lovers.

Three weeks expired, and no Lord Germaine!—It was useless to write, for the truant had certainly quitted Naples, and was probably loitering by the way at Florence, or Geneva, or some other gay resort of his countrymen; and nothing could be more embarrassing than to invent excuses for the numerous querists, who were continually flattering Lady Germaine by inquiries

after the dear nephew she was so anxiously expecting; and whom the whispers of certain milliners and embroiderers respecting the coronettization of the *trousseau de Mademoiselle de Rougement*, naturally pointed out to their suspicions as the future husband of Adela. It was equally vexatious to her ladyship to acknowledge that she was completely in the dark as to the cause of his delay, and to dawdle away her time in the hotel she had been compelled to re-engage for a month, on the prospect of his arrival. It was already Lent. Every thing at Paris was dull and desolate; and, probably, amid the million and a half of penitential souls, sighing away their sins over their *soupe maigre*, not one was smitten with a more profound sense of the vanities and vexations of human life, than poor Lady Germaine,—surrounded by bills for the paraphernalia of a wedding that was beginning to look so very problematical.

But her ladyship's perplexities were almost at an end!—She had been too frequent and too circumstantial in her investigations at the Embassy, not to have excited the sympathy of one or two of the *attachés*, who had been somewhat predisposed against Adela by her well-known antipathy to younger brothers. Anxious, therefore, to terminate a dilemma which they had pretty nearly traced to its origin, Mr. William St. Leger was, at length, deputed by his confederates to favour her ladyship with the intelligence that Lord Germaine and suite, instead of traversing France, had taken the Tyrolean and Rhine road to England; and that his lordship had crossed from Rotterdam to London five weeks before!

Startling as were these tidings, Lady Germaine had scarcely breath to read aloud to Adela, (from a copy of the Courier transmitted with the attaché's polite despatch,) the following astounding paragraph:—

"MARRIAGE IN HIGH-LIFE.

"On Thursday evening last were married, by special license, by the Lord Bishop of London, at the residence of the Hon. Remington Compton, M. P., the Right Hon. Viscount Germaine, to Jane, youngest daughter of the late Charles Raymond, Esq. After the ceremony the happy pair set off for Richmond Hall, in Westmoreland,

the seat of the bridegroom. The bridesmaids officiating on the occasion were the Lady Caroline Ilderfield, the Hon. Miss Compton, and the beautiful Miss Raymond, sister to the bride."

"THOSE RAYMONDS!!!"

CHAPTER XII.

Painted for sight, and essenced for the smell,
Like frigates fraught with spice and cochineal,
Sail in the ladies! How each pirate eyes
So frail a vessel and so rich a prize!

DONNE'S SATIRES.

VERY willingly would Adela have renounced the project of returning to London, and encountering anew the joys of "the season." She was not heart-struck, indeed; she had never regarded her cousin Germaine more tenderly than as a good-natured, pleasant creature, whom it would be very convenient to her to marry, and who would probably prove extremely indulgent to his wife. But she was mortified—injured—irritated—angry with every body. She felt that she should have no patience to hear of Lady Germaine's diamonds, and Lady Germaine's equipages; nor to listen to Mrs. Raymond's prosaic self-gratulation on the domestic happiness of her daughter Compton. It was some comfort to her that Mary was still unmarried; but, after seeing greatness so strangely thrust upon her sisters, *who* could predict what might happen to the eldest and handsomest of her three cousins.

But, though the announcement of Lord Germaine's alliance with his pretty cousin proved so sudden, so terrible a blow to Adela and her mother, there was nothing either sudden or terrible in the arrangement of the connexion. His passion for Jane had originated, indeed, in one of those childish fancies denominated "love

at first sight." Two accidental meetings—one at the Hammersmith florist's, the other in the Langdale shrubberies,—had imprinted her image on his imagination as that of a divinity. The attractive countenance and elegant form of the unknown fair one haunted his dreams as those of some wandering wood-nymph; and no sooner did a visit to his new friend William Raymond, discover to him, late in the preceding season, the object of his idolatry in the person of that sweet cousin, that "darling Jane" of whom Raymond had been so apt to rhapsodize,—than he tendered himself and his possessions to her acceptance.

It may readily be supposed that the mysterious hero of poor Jane's romance, the "him" in whose honour she had been blushing for six months past, did not prove unacceptable; and from the moment he had the happiness of hearing their engagement confirmed by Mrs. Raymond, the young lord found it very difficult to return to the heartless frivolity of Lady Germaine's circle. The Fulham family, indeed, were anxious that the connexion should be gradually dropped; and, in truth, he had never much liked Adela or his aunt. The former, he admired as a very handsome, fashionable girl, a most decided flirt, who had not sufficient generosity of mind to qualify her as the confidant of his passion for his charming Jane;—while in the latter he beheld a woman frightfully and unfemininely worldly—sickening to his reminiscences as the authoress of his first emetic—sickening to his heart as a match-making mother. He entertained no suspicion of their immediate projects on himself; fancying that he had made the kinsmanly nature of his attentions too apparent to sanction any thing resembling a matrimonial cabal: nor had he the least idea that, in giving his hand to his beloved Jane, he was doing more than stimulating Lady Germaine's old antipathy to "those Raymonds!"—of whom she had always spoken to him as low, designing people,—uniting the odium of being poor relations with every other species of vileness.

The interposition of Sir Claudius Veerham, which was the consequence of a formal intimation given him by his ward at the instigation of Remington Compton, has already been alluded to: and as to the delight, the

ecstasy with which the boy-lover flew, at the close of his probation, to claim the plighted hand of the pretty little fairy who seemed to have opened her eyes on the world of men and women, only to fix them on the being destined to be eternally her own, the subject would exhaust the superlatives even of the most experienced novelist.

Fortunately for the tranquillity of Adela, Lord and Lady Germaine were still in Westmoreland, when she found herself installed once more in her mother's residence, to experience anew the mortification of sending round their visiting-tickets for the season as the

Dowager Viscountess Germaine.

Miss Richmond.

Curzon Street.

It was some consolation to be spared for a time the spectacle of the young Viscount's raptures, and the awkward and vulgar airs of his bride. Her only remaining source of triumph was, however, the certainty that they would be awkward and vulgar; for how could one of "those Raymonds" living at Fulham, and repudiated by the great world, form an accurate conception of the forms and etiquettes of fashionable society? Lady Germaine must inevitably commit herself, and be dismissed to that paltry class of the little great, the tritons of the minnows of second-rate London.

Mean while, her own best chance of happiness was to direct her thoughts as much as possible from the prosperity of her cousins, and assume a new line of attraction, such as might serve to varnish over the true motive of her residence in Paris, and render her return triumphant. Suspicious, perhaps, that the refined delicacy of her beauty was somewhat faded, she strove to repair the injuries of time by intense affectation, and by Frenchifying her costume, manners, tone, and dialect, to the utmost extent of absurdity. Instead of renewing her pretensions to be considered the prettiest girl in London, she affected to be the best dressed; was ago-

nized by the horrors of the English toilet, as they were exhibited by some of the most elegant women at Almacks; and could no longer talk, walk, or even think, except after the exact pattern of the frivolous dolls among whom she had been passing the winter. The thing succeeded for a time, succeeded among that novelty-seeking class to which Miss Richmond's efforts were addressed.

But, wonderful to relate, the success of so paltry a stage trick was not limited to the Lady Julianas and Lady Marias whose imaginations were taken prisoners by the strangeness of her *coiffure*, or the nicety and freshness of her ball dress. While taking aim at the Almack's covey soon after her arrival in town, a random shot glanced off, and like the bolt of Cupid, "lighted on a little western flower!"

A certain Mr. Courtenay, the eldest son of a rich Devonshire Baronet, having been honoured by a chance presentation to the flirt of five seasons, was so much struck by the new world of foppery unfolded to him by the Parisian *belle*, that he immediately attached himself to her side. He was quite a young man; junior by three years to the experienced Adela, having only just quitted the University, with precisely that reserve of mind and shyness of demeanour, which so often place a man at the disposal of the first pretty woman who chooses to exert her arts for his captivation.

Adela *did* choose. He was not, it is true, so brilliant a match as her young cousin, or even as Sir Burford Raymond; and was manifestly inferior in pretensions to the Colonel Rawford and Bronze, Esq., rejected in her first season. But her kinsfolk and acquaintance were marrying around her; innumerable girls of far inferior pretensions, who had made their *debut* at the same time, were already advantageously settled in life; and she was well aware that the woes experienced by "the last Rose of summer" are no less true than tuneful. She judged it wise, therefore, to descend two or three steps from her original altitude, fancying that, thanks to the mincing affectation which now characterized all her movements, the derogation would not be noticed by the spectators.

There cannot be a more vexatious sight in the eyes of

the hard, cold, uncompromising class of rationalists, such as Rupert Orme, than that of a fine, open-hearted youth shipwrecked on the rocks of fashionable society, to be made an easy prey by the sharks, male and female, who haunt its perilous shore. Frederick Courtenay was a most accomplished scholar, not after the fashion of a Sir Burford Raymond, but in the highest sense of the word; but he was very timid in female society, destitute of knowledge of the world, scarcely knew the meaning of the word flirt,—and above all, found it impossible to fancy that the graceful, beautiful Adela, who smiled so sweetly in his face, listened so graciously to his sighs, and preferred him to all the host of danglers aspiring to her hand in every ball-room in London, had existed previously to the happy moment which introduced him to her acquaintance. *He* had not been idling away his time in club-windows, or giving ear to all the flippant slanders which circulate from coterie to coterie concerning every woman who attracts the attention of the world. A man of such refined and sensitive delicacy would have shrunk from yielding the rich treasure of his affections to one who had been so often wooed; and how much more to one who was known to have exerted her captivations for such and such a purpose—to entangle an heir apparent—or conquer the hand of a boy viscount!

Poor Courtenay!—how fondly he fell into the snare; how confidently he intrusted to the ear of Adela all the vagaries of his romantic enthusiasm, all his projects of happiness, without the slightest suspicion that she could be so base as to render his ingenuousness the scoff of Lord Augustus Cecil, and the secret object of her own unlimited contempt. And yet she rejoiced in the rash candour of her lover,—for it convinced her that a man so unsophisticated would be the most amenable and docile husband in the world.

Fortunately for Frederick, there were many circumstances to intervene previously to reducing Miss Richmond's theory to practice. His father was a rich but a cautious man; and though rarely an inhabitant of the metropolis, had connexions there of sufficient discernment to see all that was going on, and sufficient proficiency in West End lore, to know that Lady Germaine's

daughter was a fashionable coquette—the mother a manœuvring matchmaker.

Sir Frederick Courtenay, angry to find that his son and heir was seeking engagements so important without testifying his respect by confiding them to his parents, now thought proper to forestall his confessions by a letter taxing him, in a very parental tone, with folly and disingenuousness!—Even these charges might have been endured with submission by the sighing Strephon; but unfortunately the Devonshire Baronet existed beyond the circle of Adela's enchantments; and unbiassed by her Parisian graces, or even those of nature, actually presumed to discuss the fashionable Miss Richmond in a tone almost as fatherly as that which characterized his apostrophe to his son. He called Frederick a fool, and Adela a flirt!—"*Adela!*"—

Mr. Courtenay's reply exhibited of course a very proper spirit of filial resistance and lover-like indignation. He acknowledged, indeed, the justice of one half of his father's charge, in the avowal that if not a fool, he loved like one; but as to the vile aspersion on Miss Richmond's character, words failed him in rebutting the calumny.—"Adela, a flirt!—Adela, from whose side he had scarcely stirred for six weeks past; who loved him so affectionately; who so generously confessed that she found in his society, in his conversation, that charm, that kindred sympathy, she had despaired of meeting among the heartless circles to which she was restricted. Adela, who talked with him about the moonlight and the twilight; the flowers and the showers; the bright intelligence of commingling minds,—the exquisite anticipation of an eternal union, a united eternity; who died with him of a rose in aromatic pain, and revived to live with him in a chaos of bright confusion,—stars, enchanted islands, golden violets, Goethe, the devil, and Dr. Faustus!"

But Sir Frederick was not to be blinded nor deafened, nor above all silenced by these rhapsodies. He saw with the penetrating eye of fifty-five, heard with the vigilant ear of paternal solicitude, and finally spoke with the paramount authority that showed him master of the destinies of his son. He threatened the suspension of

Frederick's allowance, unless he consented to quit London; and refused to settle a single shilling on him, in the event of his marriage, unless he would put the strength of his attachment to the proof, by absenting himself for two whole years from the society of Lady Germaine and her daughter. "You are only twenty-one," wrote the matter-of-fact Baronet, "*I* did not marry till twenty-five; and yet you see how much too closely you tread upon my heels!—Take my advice, Fred. and give yourself time to grow gray before your eldest son writes to acquaint you that he is about to provide you with a daughter-in-law, towards whom you entertain a strong antipathy."

It was impossible to exhibit this insulting protocol to Lady Germaine; and it was even very difficult to modify its contents with any chance of making his father's intentions intelligible, and escaping being forbidden the house. The crisis was imminent; and poor Frederick Courtenay executed a very perturbed rap at the door in Curzon Street, when he betook himself thither with a view to explanation. One only alternative suggested itself to his mind,—which he hastened to attach to his preliminaries. He had already learned from Lady Germaine, that Adela was entitled on her marriage to a fortune of five thousand pounds; and would she but consent to become his own in defiance of the menaces of his father, they might appropriate this sum to their expenses, and continue to reside with Mamma in Curzon Street, till Sir Frederick Courtenay could be wrought upon to listen to their proposals.

What a notion!—what a scheme to propound to a cunning dowager!—To be sure, poor Fred. was the son of "a De'nshire clown," and more addicted to the perusal of Plato than the maxims of La Rochefoucauld!

Instead of acceding to this proposal of becoming a resident in her house, Lady Germaine conceived very strong inclinations to order him to be turned out of it on the spot; but frequent disappointments and the untoward state of Adela's affairs rendered her cautious; and after begging time to take his project into consideration, she arranged the business very much to her own satisfaction, by one of those curious specimens of epistolary circumlocution, by which fashionable ladies contrive to

do the rudest things in the most gracious manner. The original document occupied a sheet and a half of wire-wove paper. In print, and divested of its courtsuit of flummery and deprecation, the heart of the matter may be contained in two lines,—that he must not again enter her doors till sanctioned by Sir Frederick Courtenay's consent to his union with Miss Richmond.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is a miserable thing to live always in suspense: 'tis the life of the spider. SWIFT.

It was just two days after this catastrophe, and Adela sat moping over her breakfast, wearied to death by the vigils of a dull ball at the mansion of the old-fashioned Duchess of Rackwell's, which she had exerted herself to attend in order to silence the ill-natured rumours already current respecting Mr. Courtenay's sudden departure for Devonshire; while Lady Germaine, attired in those fatal spectacles which she never ventured to use unless in the confidential privacy of domestic life, pored over the columns of the Morning Post, At the opera, or in the park, she was near-sighted, and required a glass:—in Curzon Street, over the morning papers, she condescended to be old and blind enough for spectacles.

"Yes! here it is," said Lady Germaine addressing her daughter—'Frederick Courtenay, Esq. for the seat of his father Sir Frederick Courtenay, Bart. Brooklands, Devonshire.'—How I hate the tittle-tattle of the English newspapers! Why cannot they allow people to go in and out of town without flourishing the trumpet of Fame, like the clarion for a royal entrée in a tragedy."

"Announced among the departures?—What a bore! —The Howards asked me so many questions last night about the cause of his absence; and insisted he was gone

into the country to look for a house for our future residence. Of course I did not deny it; and I am sure I looked guilty and conscious enough."

"And should you meet them to-night at Lady Westerham's you will have some new pretext to invent! But what have we here?" continued her ladyship, running her eye along a column of dates and proper names, —"Something about 'those Raymonds;' yes!—the genealogy of the Raymond family,—'distinguished antiquarian; researches in the Morea; island of Cerigo,—Naxos,—Homer's School;'—Good heavens! my dear Adela! how very lucky; after all, every thing has happened for the best!—Sir Burford Raymond is dead!"—

"Indeed!" exclaimed Adela, not immediately perceiving the nature of her good fortune in the event. "Probably he caught a *malaria* fever, poking among the foundations of the Eternal City; and has bequeathed his remains to be converted into a mummy by the hands of that conservator of learned lumber, Nicodemus Fagg."

"His *remains!*—To whom do you think he has bequeathed his *estates?*"

"Some college, or public institution?"

"No, Adela, no!—fourteen thousand a year, Langdale, and the house in Seamore Place! Bless my soul; who would have thought it!"

"To me?" interrupted Miss Richmond, astonished by her mother's agitation.

"To you, if you will condescend to play your cards according to my advice," said Lady Germaine. "To Harry Raymond, Adela; to our own dear Harry!—Lord Germaine's godson, the playmate of your infancy!"

"Whom *you* drove from your house, and *I* from my heart!" cried her daughter, with bitterness; "the only man for whom I ever really cared; the only man who ever really cared for me; the man who, of all others, has a right to detest me!"

"Nonsense!" cried Lady Germaine, greatly shocked by this unbecoming ebullition of feeling or temper on the part of her daughter. "Harry Raymond is well aware of the strictness of *my* sense of maternal duty, and yours of filial submission. He is not silly enough to

imagine that I should think of allowing my only daughter to starve as the wife of a beggarly ensign in the Guards; or to fancy that you would renounce your duty to your mother for his sake."

"It must be owned he has had strong evidence to the contrary," cried Adela; "and if he have but a thousandth part of the spirit for which I give him credit, nothing will induce him to renew the offer of his affections where they have been so injuriously treated. I know, I feel, I loathe the full extent of my heartless conduct towards my cousin. I know it by the greatness of my original repugnance in attempting the task!"

"Well, well, do not let us whimper over our repentance of the blunder," said Lady Germaine, perceiving that the tears stood in her daughter's eyes. "It may not yet be too late. I have half the morning to dispose of; let us drive to Fulham and see what we can extract from your Aunt Raymond. Only to think how that woman has got on in the world!—I wish she would teach us her secret."

Some glimmering of the truth flashed at that moment across Adela's mind; but she dared not give it utterance. She dreaded the irony of her fashionable mother too much to express a conviction, that rectitude of purpose and conduct, formed the arcanum by which "those Raymonds" had contrived to ensure the respect of society,—the favour of God and man.

They were disappointed, however, in their hope of worming the secrets of the family out of Mrs. Raymond's guileless heart. She had driven into town in her pony-chair to visit the person by whom it was originally presented to her,—the kind thoughtful Margaret,—and to provide mourning for the rest of the family. Although her son, her pride, her Harry, was a gainer by the event to an extent little less than miraculous in the widow's estimation, she received the announcement of Sir Burford's death with decency and respect. The deceased had been a true friend to her; had rescued her William—her last-born—the child who had nestled in her bosom as she bent over its father's death-bed—from the miseries of foreign banishment.—Mighty and various are the sources of good and happy feeling that rise in the bosom of a parent!

During her mother's absence, they were welcomed by Mary; and Adela Richmond, among all her woes, had the comfort of perceiving that if the hand of Time had operated disadvantageously on her own countenance, it had not altogether spared that of her lovely cousin. Mary was paler, thinner, more subdued in tone than during her triumphant days of beauty; and while it occurred vexatiously to Lady Germaine that her niece had gained in elegance all she had lost in freshness, Adela did not hesitate to attribute the alteration in her appearance to envy of the superior fortunes of her sisters. Mary's rash rejection of the Duke of Dronington's son had not yet travelled so far as Curzon Street.

Her reception of her aunt and cousin was courteous but constrained. Adela and Adela's mother were now thoroughly seen through and appreciated at Fulham. Lord Germaine, Harry, poor Sir Burford, old Orme, had each contributed his contingent of intelligence, in addition to the ordinary accusations of society; and the "young ravens" were, at length, on their guard against the bland amenities of both. Lady Germaine, on the present occasion, was eloquent in expressing her regret that she was so seldom able to get as far as Fulham, while Mary regretted that she found leisure to come at all; nor could the visiters extract more from her concerning either the last baronet or the present, than that Harry was with his regiment in Dublin when the news arrived, and was now on his road to Langdale; and that Sir Burford had been attacked by banditti while prowling with Nicodemus in a ruined amphitheatre at Girgenti; that the patron had been only frightened, the divine seriously injured,—that Dr. Fagg had recovered from his wounds, while the baronet died of his fright! She did not think it necessary to gratify the curiosity of the two guests, who were

"A little more than kin, and less than kind,"

by acquainting them that Sir Burford, on excluding his ex-tutor from the family living, had enriched him in lieu, with an annuity of two thousand a-year, partly as an act of compensation, and partly to ensure his services to the cause of those scientific researches so im-

portant in the estimation of both; or that he had bequeathed a legacy of twenty thousand pounds to her mother, a plain gold ring bearing his initials to Margaret Compton, and to her brother Henry the whole residue of his fortune, real and personal! The will was dated on the day he heard of Remington Compton's union with Miss Raymond; so that it was not surprising he found no time to write and acknowledge his mother's letter containing the intelligence.

"This will never do," cried Lady Germaine, as she got into the carriage to return to town; "we shall make nothing out of these cold formal people. If I can ascertain the newspaper report concerning Sir Henry to be well founded, we must be ready on his return to town, to welcome him with the greatest frankness and cordiality, and you will soon find him replaced on the old footing in Curzon Street. His brigade has been in Ireland for the last year, and you are as well aware as myself that he had formed no particular connexions in society previously to quitting London."

But Sir Henry Raymond was destined to disappoint all the prognostications of that tender aunt who had so magnanimously dismissed her husband's favourite in his little hussar jacket, to starve in the bosom of his family. He had not the least thought of returning to town. All his wishes, all his anxieties were centred at Langdale, and all his family and friends had promised, in the course of the summer, to centre there, too;—from old Rupert Orme to Margaret's expected baby. It is true, poor Lady Raymond, now infirm and nearly doting, had a right to retain it as a jointure-house for life; but she had just sense enough left to feel that she should be more comfortable at Mapleton than in the desolate old mansion; and good nature enough to wish to leave Langdale free from the gratification of her dear Harry's happy projects. She loved the successor of her unfortunate son because he was the favourite of her own Sir Richard; and found in the premature decease of Sir Burford rather a topic for lamentation and wonder and discussion, than of intense affliction. In truth he had been a most uncomfortable son to her; transformed into a pedant before he was breeched, she had to thank the officiousness of the Duke of Dronington for depriving

her of half the enjoyments of maternal love. She could not but be sensible that Harry, in assisting her removal to her pretty cottage at Mapleton, and studying her pleasure, and caprice, and convenience in every trifle, showed more activity in her behalf in the course of eight and forty hours, than the F. S. A. in the course of the whole eight and forty years of his existence.

Mean while Adela was drinking the dregs of the season, with a nauseated palate and tremulous hand. Every successive Wednesday she flattered herself with a hope of seeing Henry glide into the ball-room at Willis's, in

The customary suit of Stulz's black,

and the graceful urbanity characteristic of the popularity of a man of twelve thousand per annum.—But still he came not!—Every week the assembly grew thinner and thinner, till at length nothing remained by way of partner but the abhorrent congregation of nobodies;—the subalterns of the Guards or household brigade—the Whitehall and Downing-street penmenders, and a few second-rate men of first-rate fortune, who found it impossible to buy their way into society so long as the higher class of exquisites and ineffables were on the spot to quiz them down:—but not a glimpse, not a prospect of the young Baronet.

At length Lady Germaine grew desperate. "This will never do," mumbled she, as Miss Richmond and herself were returning home from a ball in the bright dawn of a July morning;—their flowers and tinsel, the envy of every Welsh milk-maid swinging her pails through the empty streets,—their haggard eyes and glaring rouge the scoff of the artisan plodding to his daily labours. "There is no chance of Harry coming to town so late in the season. Your *trousseau* will be out of fashion if the match happens to be put off till next year; besides you are gradually running through all the ball-dresses, and to no purpose;—I *must* take some decided step!"

"I am sure you would not talk of steps just now, if you were as tired as I am," faltered Adela, yawning and closing her eyes.

"I trust I am too much of a mother to consider my own selfish ease before the interests of my family," said Lady G., with a significant sneer. "I have made up my mind to set off for Southampton in a day or two; and I will write in an off-hand sort of way to Sir Henry, and let him know we think of taking Langdale in our way. I shall talk of my abhorrence of inns, and claim his hospitality for a single night; and when once we are fairly lodged, he cannot avoid asking us to prolong our stay. Besides, the Droningtons have frequently begged me to visit them, should I find my way to that part of the country; and when your friend Lady Caroline Ilderfield learns you are so near, it will be impossible not to invite us to Dronington Manor."

"I have nothing to say against the project," replied Adela, "except that it will never be realized. Harry will doubtless make some excuse to avoid receiving us."

"And do you imagine I would give him the opportunity? I shall get a frank to-day and delay sending it till to-morrow, as if through a blunder at the post-office; which will give me a decent apology for following my letter without waiting his reply. His silence, you know, will be supposed to give consent."

From that moment till Lady Germaine's travelling carriage with its imperials, chaise-seats, drop-seats, wells, and cap-boxes, made its appearance at the door, all was confusion in Curzon Street. Jewel-boxes were to be stuffed with cotton,—caps, bonnets, and garlands suspended on tape in their appointed receptacles; the convenience of a favourite gown studied like that of a favourite child, and the comfort of a plaited collerette watched over like an infirm parent. "Pray take care of my blue toque," cried the mother to her poor, fagged, panting lady's maid. "Remember I cannot allow any thing to interfere with my pink pelisse," echoed the daughter.

All proceeded prosperously. An unintelligible frank was scrawled by Lord Augustus Cecil for the occasion, duly delayed, duly despatched, like a balloon sent up to try the course of the wind; and four and twenty hours afterwards, the grand machine, the dowager chariot with its appurtenances (the sober butler and flashy

femme de chambre grumbling a duet in the dickey behind,) followed in the same direction. The journey, like July journeys in general, was hot, dusty, and irritating. The vile odours characteristic of the dog-day atmosphere of all country-towns, with their tan-pits and chandler's melting-pots, pursued them from Kensington to Guilford; from Guilford to * * * * *, where they descended from the carriage for the beautification of half an hour. Lady Germaine refreshed her complexion, Adela her tresses; while the sober butler washed down the fiery atoms of fifty-five miles of road dust, with a pint of still more fiery fluid, looking like water and smelling of prussic acid.

At length a direction post ☞ To Langdale House, greeted their longing eyes; and on turning through a swing-gate into a handsome private approach leading to the lodge, the great staring dwelling-house of the Raymonds stood before them. Its former ardent hue was reduced, indeed, to the paleness of the butler's ardent decoction; but in spite of a coating of Bernasconi, the Baronetal residence looked as hideous as ever.

"I shall certainly have it pulled down, and make Harry build one nearer to the plantations," drawled Miss Richmond, as they approached the house.

"Upon my word, this business begins to be a little nervous," observed her mother, stretching on her gloves as they passed the drawing-room windows, and drew up before the hall door; "but thank goodness, *I* can put a good face upon any thing."

A bold one, she certainly could; nor was her ladyship the least moved by the consternation apparent in the countenances of the footmen and gray-headed house steward, who made their appearance on the announcement of visiters. A parley ensued between them and her own man, whose complexion now emulated all the former fierceness of Langdale House.

"Is Sir Henry Raymond at home?" cried Lady Germaine from the carriage window, growing impatient at the delay.

"The servants say, my lady," replied he of the glowing visage, "that their master can't see nobody; Sir Henry is engaged werry particlar."

"Bid them take in my card," said her ladyship, be-

coming a little nervous; which sensation was considerably increased during the pause that ensued.

At length, with a most perplexed countenance, Sir Henry Raymond made his appearance, and ordering the carriage door to be opened, leaned into it in an attitude plainly evincing he had very little intention the steps should be let down to facilitate Lady Germaine's invasion of his family mansion. For several minutes, however, she took care that nothing should be heard but her warm congratulations on his recent good fortune and invariable good looks; while Adela, on whom the latter were not thrown away, threw herself back in the carriage and said not a word. For once *her* feelings were genuine. Her heart throbbed less at the sight of the Baronet than of her cousin Harry.

"I am half afraid your ladyship has not received my letter," said Sir Henry at last, and with tolerable firmness, "or you would scarcely brave the want of accommodation I was unfortunately compelled to announce. The truth is, my dear Lady Germaine, I have not a bed I can presume to offer to you or Miss Richmond. My mother, the Comptons, and Germaine's,—my whole family, indeed,—are united here for the ceremony of to-morrow, and——"

"Ceremony!" reiterated the dowager, with a horrible presentiment rattling in her throat. "I was not aware——"

"And as my marriage with Miss Compton will be solemnized in the family chapel at Compton Park, I am of course not at liberty to issue invitations to such of my own family as are strangers to Alicia's. Perhaps, on your return, your ladyship may favour us with a visit at Langdale; but at present, I can scarcely hope to induce you to put up with the inconveniences and irregularities attending events of this description. We are in a sad state of confusion!"

Not half so sad as that of the Dowager. Even the excellent "face," the subject of her recent boasting, was put to the blush. Her congratulations, and apologies, and explanations, were blended into a general stammer; while Harry stood bowing and smiling over the carriage steps, whose compact economy he was so inhospitably careful to avoid disturbing.

The only intelligible words of her oration formed its concluding phrase—"Pray tell the postboys to drive to the Dolphin at Southampton." Adela mean while said nothing. She was crying bitterly under her Mechlin veil.

CHAPTER XIV.

How great soe'er your rigours are,
With them alone I'll cope;
I can endure my own despair,
But not another's hope.

WALSH.

FROM Southampton, induced by the restlessness, partly of indisposition, partly of vexation, Lady Germaine was tempted to cross to Dieppe; and after a summer and autumn unprofitably passed in dancing attendance on the Duchesse de Berri, and avoiding the dancing attendance of the very unacceptable throng of her countrymen assembled in that bone-carving town, she was compelled, by the advice of the physicians, to repair for the winter months to the south of France. The health of the over-excited, over-fed, over-heated, over-fatigued woman of fashion, was already broken by a thousand infirmities. Her temper (or, as *she* termed it, her mind) had been long preying on her body; and she became daily more fractious and more unamuseable than ever.

There is perhaps no moment in which the virtuous mother enjoys so plentifully the product of the good seed she has sown, as during those irritable years which precede the approach of age. Not yet wholly weaned from the world, she requires amusement, combined with forbearance towards the listless discontent with which the hollow diversions of society begin to inspire an immortal spirit, verging towards the confines of eternity. At such a time, the soothing attentions of a daughter form a gentle solace to the "cradle of de-

clining age." Affection never speaks so cheeringly as with the still small voice it assumes to comfort the sick and the sorrowful.

But Lady Germaine had sowed the wind, to reap the whirlwind. Adela had never learned to respect her mother in health, and took little heed of her indisposition. She grumbled without intermission during a drizzly winter at Toulouse, where nothing presented itself available to her views, or cheering to her despondency.

The Prefect was an old beau of seventy-five; and the only English residents were a married clergyman, a medical student dying of a decline, and a half-pay captain in the navy, who called her "Miss."

Her prospects brightened, however, with the spring. Lady Germaine's medical attendants insisting that a return to her native latitudes must be fatal, thought fit to suggest the baths of the Pyrennees; and away they went to Bagnères, to regret that they had not preferred Barège; and after quitting it, and establishing themselves at Barège, to pine after Bagnères. Discontented with themselves, they were out of humour with every thing else.

There was one advantage, however, at Bagnères, which reconciled them to a thousand deficiencies. There was an English lord!—unmarried, rich, good-looking—with an air of sentimental misanthropy, a pair of large mustaches, and of small Andalusian ponies. Adela had not been there a week before she made up her mind to find her way into his *char-â-banc*; and to the great delight of mother and daughter, their advances were met cheerfully and a great deal more than half-way, by the Marquis of Stoneham.

The heir of Dronington Manor was now a very different person from the puny, effeminate, self-conceited lordling rejected by Mary Raymond three years before. A tour of Europe had strengthened his mind and weakened his self-confidence—darkened his complexion, and brightened his understanding. Nothing can be more ungenerous than to infer too much of a man's character, from his days of whelphood. The dullest youths are often fathers to the most intelligent men; and the schooling of society has converted many a boor and many a bore into refined and entertaining companions.

But it was not the improvement visible either in his physical or moral aspect, which rendered so delightful to the Richmonds his undisguised pretensions to their favour. They had not forgotten the impression produced on their minds during their disastrous journey through Hampshire the preceding season, by the fine woods and venerable turrets of Dronington Manor. What a world of enjoyment was centred in its thriving timber!—What a life of luxurious ease, of velvet and ermine, of diamond and gilt-plate, might be passed beneath that lordly roof!—What splendour, what pomp, what adulation, awaited its future Duchess!—As they drove through many a village and town, manifestly dependencies of the feof, and graced by countless copies of the "Ilderfield Arms," each illustrating some variation in a village Landseer's notions of a salamander (the crest of the family,) or a brace of gryphons (its supporters,) the Dowager had vainly tried to call to mind all that she had ever seen or heard of the heir-apparent of the Droningtons.

But Adela remembered only, that Lord Stoneham was a short-sighted, long-backed young nobleman, who never could manage to manœuvre more than the right leg in dancing a quadrille, hopping about on the left like a Numidian crane; and Lady Germaine could recall to mind nothing but that his younger brother Horace Ilderfield, in proposing for her daughter's hand, had assured her it was very unlikely the Marquis should ever marry. But *this* she knew was an assertion which younger sons of the nobility usually append to the parchment of their commission, or the stock receipt for their £5000.

The Dowager's recovery outstripped even the predictions of the physicians. Whether the air of the Pyrennees or the heir of Dronington Manor was chiefly concerned in her amendment, it might be difficult to decide; but she was now able to ascend mountains, descend into valleys,—defy sun, wind, and dust, whenever her chaperonship was in request. Even Adela, whom a year's do-nothingness had in a great measure restored to her original freshness of complexion, grew every day more handsome and more graceful under the

influence of the Marquis of Stoneham's attentions. "La Belle Anglaise" was the boast of the baths; and his lordship, who had been peregrinating among the dark-browed beauties of Spain, and the dingy sultanas of Morocco, could not sufficiently admire the snowy purity of her complexion, the effulgent lustre of those soft blue eyes, so benignantly bent upon himself. The young lord must have been a monster to receive the advances of his fair countrywoman with ungraciousness.

But there was unquestionably something more than mere graciousness in his mode of seizing Adela's hand, à l'Anglaise, whenever they met; and of tendering his arm to her in all those rural excursions and evening pic-nics, which the early hours of the Pyrennean watering-places render so charming a source of amusement and sentiment. Lord Stoneham and Miss Richmond were continually rambling together in the twilight, collecting glow-worms and quoting Byron; he taught *her* Spanish, while *she* affected to rhodomontade about eternal attachments, and indulge in a world of romanticisms. Nor did his lordship ever seem weary of listening to her shallow discourse, which he probably constructed into naïveté. He seemed to glory in hearing her reiterate, again and again, that the cottages they passed sheltered among branching cork-trees, with bee-hives basking against their white walls, and dirty little children basking at their open doors, afforded just such a home as the presence of those she loved could render delightful. Of course the Marquis was equally at liberty to hope that "the presence of those she loved" alluded to that of a happy individual with a salamander crest and gryphon supporters; and to exercise his eloquence in seducing her to believe that Dronington Manor might be rendered a charming residence under similar influence. But Lord Stoneham was no longer the lump of inanity and affectation, the self-conceited dandy which had deigned of old to nod its notice to Mary Raymond in the Langdale parlour. He was now gentle, gentlemanly, well-bred, and consequently diffident; and evidently hesitated in applying to himself the allusions of Adela, and the maternal encourage-

ment of Lady Germaine. Once or twice, indeed, he alluded to the marriage of her cousin Lord Germaine, with whom he had been at college, and uttered something very like an expression of doubt and anxiety lest they might never become more nearly connected; an apprehension which his fair auditresses would have given worlds to sooth with an assurance that the measure of their relationship depended wholly on himself.

The summer wore away in rides, drives, excursions, fêtes, and sentimentalization by hill and dale,—among the mountain forests or in the deep valleys; and then the Dowager, finding her own inauspicious month of August approach, arrive, and pass away without any definite proposal, began to grow fidgetty, and attempt to accelerate his lordship's movements by frequent allusions to her return to England. Nor were her anxieties decreased, when one day Adela, returning from her daily ride with Lord Stoneham, assured her that an epistle addressed in her cousin Harry's hand-writing had been put into her lover's hands as they stopped to inquire for letters.

"You may rely on it, my dear," cried Lady Germaine, throwing down the French novel she was reading, "that Lord Stoneham has thought it necessary to apply to Sir Henry Raymond as the head of your family. It is quite a piece of old-fashioned Ilderfield politeness."

"It seems they have been long acquainted," said her daughter. "But really I think he might have been satisfied with *your* approval. What has the head of the family to do with the business, so long as my own mother sanctions his proposals?"

"Very true, my love; but I have no doubt he means it as a mark of respect. You know the Droningtons were always considered quizzy good sort of people."

"And yet I think my friend Lady Caroline, and more especially my old flirt Horace Ilderfield, know more of the world than to maintain this sort of frozen formality. I really expect *their* brother to demean himself a little less like Sir Charles Grandison in the cedar parlour. I don't half like his writing to Har-

ry Raymond without saying a word to us on the subject."

"Why, it is not quite impossible he may have thought proper to ask his advice as a friend. And really Sir Henry's conduct has been so very strange, has exhibited so little gratitude for the kindness I showed him during his childhood, that I scarcely know what reliance may be placed on his good-will. He may insinuate to Lord Stoneham a thousand ill-natured things concerning you."

"*That* I am satisfied he would not!" cried Adela. "I know Harry; that is, I did know him, and have little reason to believe him changed. I am persuaded that even my abominable conduct towards *him* would not induce him to act injuriously towards *me*. Harry was always the kindest creature in the world."

"Lady Raymond may have produced a revolution in his character. Remember all your Aunt Raymond's letter said concerning his dear Alicia's influence over him."

"She would not render him an evil speaker or a backbiter, were it twice as great!" cried Adela Richmond in a more animated tone than she was apt to assume.

"But how shall we find out the purport of his correspondence with Stoneham?" cried Lady Germaine, startled by her daughter's petulance. Did you observe any thing in his manner affording a hope that the explanation will soon take place?"

"No, he placed the letter in his pocket; and was only twice as silent as usual during our short ride home.

Strange to relate, this uncommunicative mood seemed rather to increase than to diminish. For several days, for a week, for ten days, for a fortnight, Lady Germaine laboured without ceasing to provoke an explanation, and never lighted upon the propitious vein; while poor Adela sighed away her time, and began to wax exceeding weary of the procrastinations of her lover. Every day he grew more silent, more ruminative; and had he not been heir-apparent to a dukedom, and unmarried, she would have voted him a horrible bore. At length even the Dowager, who had been a preacher of

patience throughout the affair, grew positively indignant at the man's stupidity; and having determined to rouse his dormant faculties by a *coup de main*, affected a sudden change of plan. Instead of persisting in her return to England, she announced her intention of proceeding to Italy for the winter. She entertained very little doubt that the young Marquis would be at Adela's feet within four and twenty hours after this horrific intelligence.

To her ladyship's unspeakable consternation, however, Lord Stoneham with a gentle smile and tranquil voice expressed infinite regret at hearing they were to part so soon; and his "infinite regret" was set forth with a degree of listlessness which would have better become an apology for having trod on her poodle's tail. —What could he mean by such *insouciance?*—what could he mean by alluding to his approaching voyage from Bordeaux to Southampton, while *she* was talking of hers, from Marseilles to Genoa?—What possessed the man, or rather what had so long possessed herself, to allow him to dawdle on without any explicit declaration of his intentions?—She resolved to bring the business to a crisis: and fancying that the sight of a travelling carriage and trunks might be more effective than a mere threat, Lady Germaine actually proceeded in her preparations for departure; her passport was *vise* for Italy, and she went so far as to take leave of her Bagnères friends.

The evening preceding the fatal day of her journey arrived; and all her guests having uttered their adieux,—in order to leave an opportunity for what they regarded as a farewell between two young people actually betrothed,—Lady Germaine and Adela grew extremely nervous—breathed short—spoke incoherently. They saw from Lord Stoneham's brightened eye and flushed cheek that he was on the brink of a declaration;—pitied his trepidation, and strove to lessen it by increased urbanity and an air of tender protection.

His lordship's scruples probably gave way before such an excess of kindness and consideration; for after much stammering, blushing, and breathlessness, he, at last found courage to articulate that, "it gave him infinite pleasure,—that nothing on earth could be more

gratifying to his feelings,—than to know, on parting from such esteemed friends as Lady Germaine and Miss Richmond,—that when they met again it would be under a mutual connexion so much more interesting."

His esteemed friend, Lady Germaine naturally thought this a very singular mode of tendering his hand to her daughter's acceptance; and his esteemed friend, Miss Richmond, voted him very cool and very self-assured. But then he was heir to a dukedom!

"When I received Sir Henry Raymond's first reply to my proposals," persisted the agitated Marquis, "I scarcely thought myself justified, my dear madam, in referring the matter to yourself. But from his second letter, which reached me only this afternoon, and is of a far more satisfactory nature, I now venture to trust that all is settled, and that I am the happiest of men!"

Lady Germaine naturally conceived that her daughter had been playing her false, and had chosen to conceal Lord Stoneham's previous proposals from her knowledge; while Adela secretly opined that her lover's mind was bewildered, and that he understood not the meaning of his own words.

"Having been so fortunate as to succeed in dispelling the prejudices of the woman of my heart," cried he, "I am not, I trust, too bold in expressing a hope that your ladyship will adopt as a relation one whom you have kindly permitted to aspire to the title of friend."

"My dear Stoneham!" ejaculated her ladyship maternally,—applying her handkerchief to her eyes, and deciding that her future son-in-law was a tedious fool.

"When I quitted England under such miserable auspices," he continued, "I had very very little hope of returning to it the happy man I now feel. Nay!—even when I arrived in the Pyrennees, how little did I anticipate that an accidental encounter with your ladyship would re-assure my anxieties;—would satisfy me that she was still unmarried—that half my fears had been proved groundless by her refusal of those brilliant offers which have doubtless done homage to the loveliness of so exquisite a being."

"Yes! indeed," replied the Dowager, greatly mystified, but feeling that some sort of reply was indispensa-

ble. "I hope I may acknowledge, without indiscretion, that she has refused some of the most advantageous matches in England."

"My dear mamma!" interposed Adela, with a very proper blush.

"I knew it—I was sure of it!" cried the young Marquis. "Permit me, Lady Germaine, to gratify my pride,—my vanity,—my selfishness.—by the confession; for till I perused Sir Henry's letter this evening, I was, of course, unaware of the sentiments I have been so fortunate as to excite."

"Sir Henry Raymond!"—exclaimed Adela, still more and more amazed. "What can have given him grounds for such an insinuation?"—

"He assures me," replied Lord Stoneham, modestly, "that it has long been the opinion of his family, —nay!—Mary herself has, at last, been wrought upon to acknowledge, that she has long repented her precipitate refusal of a man so affectionately devoted to her; and Miss Raymond deigns to confess, in a postscript to her brother's letter, that it did not need the alterations effected by time in my boyish absurdities, to dispose her in my favour. In short, my dear madam, the whole Raymond family have given their consent to our marriage."

"Those Raymonds!" faintly articulated Lady Germaine, as she fell back in her chair.

CONCLUSION.

Happy they—the happiest of their kind!

THOMSON.

It was a very happy party that assembled at Langdale the following Christmas, to celebrate the christening of little Rupert Compton, heir to the new-fangled house of Soho. Mrs. Raymond had the happiness of seeing herself surrounded by the smiling faces of her sons and daughters,—by affectionate, and grateful hearts. Amidst all their prosperity they had not forgotten, and could not forget, the personal privations by which she had managed to secure to their childhood the comforts bestowed on the offspring of more fortunate parents. They remembered what a mother she had been to them; and vied with each other in respect and tenderness.

"Harry—for none of them could ever manage to regard the thoughtless, free-handed, frank-hearted young guardsman as "Sir Henry,"—was still no less the lover than the husband of the giddy Alicia. Margaret and her grave and studious Remington, who, in spite of his early years, was already considered the leader of his party in the House of Commons,—had some difficulty in repressing the sallies of the new master of Langdale, and Lord and Lady Germaine, so as to suit the sobriety of old Rupert Orme; while the bride and bridegroom, the Marquis of Stoneham and his beautiful Mary, whose course of true love had run the roughest, or, at least, the slowest of the whole family, divided their leisure between Dronington Manor and the less formal circle where they were still at liberty to select each other from the rest of the company. Four happier or more cheerful couples it would have, perhaps, been

difficult to find; nor was their youthful gaiety moderated by the presence of Charles, (the young artillery man, who, as the only bachelor of the tribe, was beginning to be a first favourite with Mr. Orme,) or William, who had not yet assumed the graver aspect and sterner duties of his future profession. Well might Mrs. Raymond exult in the mercies of Providence, and the good fruits brought forth by her maternal culture!

The name of Adela was occasionally mentioned among them with regret; and if some little portion of blame was permitted to mingle with the observations of the female moiety of the Langdale circle, it attached itself exclusively to her odious mother. They were all willing to admit that their pretty cousin was a charming creature before the precepts and example of Lady Germaine transformed her to a match-making coquette; and to hope that the unsuccessful flirt of so many seasons would, at last, secure some eligible establishment, calculated to set her mother's manœuvres at rest, and restore her to the peace of mind and respectability of her early years.

But Providence, which had so long farthered the wishes of "those Raymonds," was in this instance inexorable!—On the following Christmas, they had precisely the same cousinly prayer to put forward; and with the greater zeal, that Adela and her mother were said to have exposed themselves to the ridicule of a large circle of Italian friends, by their ignorance that the wife of Prince Borghese was still living, and their anxiety to supply her rank as "absent without leave."

But neither Naples nor Florence,—neither Rome nor Vienna,—have proved more satisfactory than the original orbit pursued by the cunning dowager. Vainly has she spread her nets in every climate, extending her blandishments throughout all nations and languages;—"Jews, Christians, and Turks," members of the Greek and Romish churches, Lutherans, Calvinists, Unitarians, or Presbyterians,—it mattered nothing to her ladyship. Having discerned the hopelessness of seeking a British coronet for the notorious flirt, she is becoming doubly solicitous to ensure a place in the aristocracy of some other country. Even Sir Frederick Courtenay is disposed of to one of the giggling Miss

Dechiminis, who fell in love with his heroics; and whose vulgar brother was the object of one of Adela's unsuccessful manœuvres in the course of her Italian tour.

In short, though Mary is now Duchess of Dronington, and Margaret, Lady Soho;—though the Honourable Lady Raymond and the Right Honourable Lady Germaine are leading members of the fashionable coteries, Adela is still "Miss Richmond," and her mother an infirm, peevish, and obscure dowager; hopeless in their present dilapidated aspect of exciting even the notice of Captain Raymond Orme, M. P., or even of the Reverend William, the young Rector of Langdale. "The flirt of ten seasons" is now wintering at Brighton, laying active siege to the heart of a jaundiced Bhurtpoor, K.C.B. while Lady Germaine not only despairs of the result, but can scarcely endure to sanction a scheme, the utmost success of which would leave the destinies of her daughter so immeasurably below the level of even the least fortunate of "those Raymonds!"

HEARTS AND DIAMONDS;

OR,

"FIFTY YEARS AGO."

Mopsa.—I love stories in print, a' life; for then we are sure they are true.
Autolycus.—Here's one to a very doleful tune.
Mopsa.—Is it true, think you?
Autolycus.—Very true.

WINTER'S TALE.

CHAPTER I.

Il me semble que l'on dit les choses encore plus finement qu'on ne peut les écrire. LA BRUYERE.

ONE morning last spring, the busy idleness of a London life placed me for a few hours in company with old Lady Clendennis (the most anecdotic of the dowagers surviving the court of Queen Charlotte, and the brilliant era of D——— House,) while she sought out a fashionable miniature painter to perpetuate the beauties of her niece, Lady Emily Derwent. With true feminine indecision of choice, we visited every British artist of renown in this delicate department of the art, and, at length, set off in pursuit of a new wonder;—some wild man of the mountains, a member of all the academies in Europe, who had been recommended to the notice of Lady Clendennis by one of the fashionable lion-feeders of May Fair.

Signore Ambrazani was to be found on one of the stories of a large mansion in a populous and fashionable street at the west end of the town: a house such as may occasionally be noticed in the best situations; wearing, in defiance of the wide sashes, plate glass, Bernasconi cement, mahogony window-frames, and architectural breadth of its modernized neighbourhood, the same ill-pointed, dilapidated-looking frontage, wainscoted door with projecting architrave and adjacent link extinguisher, two-paned windows, and roof of irregular red tiles, with which it adorned or disfigured the reign of the first George.

On descending into a hall below the level of the street, the pavement of humid and chequered marble, the staircase creaking and careless of the perpendicular, of which the worn-out and obsolete parquet was uneclipsed by the superfluity of a carpet—all spoke of a

past century. The place was old-fashioned and gloomy; and while we mounted to the studio of the artist, I could not forbear commenting to Lady Clendennis on the improvement of our domestic architecture, contrasted with the paltry wooden pilasters, painted cornices, and heavy Dutch carving, to be found in the interiors of the last century. From Blenheim Castle to Signore Ambrazani's lodgings, all that our grandfathers have left us of this description, is cold, formal, and graceless.

But the Dowager bestowed no notice on my tirade. She was gazing around her with an air of mournful recognition; and even on our introduction to the painting-room and red morocco cases of the artist, I observed that she was far less intent on criticising the frizzed and sévignéd goddesses enshrined therein, than in pacing his extensive apartment, seating herself in a high-backed chair of exploded outline and dimensions, and regarding with unaccountable earnestness an old folding screen of worn-out japan, such as might have sheltered the coterie of my Lady Lizard, or some "lady in a sacque," of the time of Addison and Steele.

Nor was the harangue of poor Ambrazani better received than the effusions of my own eloquence. He praised himself for some minutes in uninterrupted fluency;—enumerated the number of crowned heads whom he had disfigured for the decoration of diplomatic snuff-boxes, and the edification of posterity;—specified his academic honours, and the titles of his daily sitters;—while the attention of his auditress was as far from the spot and the hour, as though she had

> eaten of the insane root
> That takes the reason prisoner.

"Why were you so ungracious to that poor man?" said I, as we regained the carriage to pursue our airing along the King's Road. "You turned away in the midst of a florid description of his parting interview with the Pope; and while he was kissing the hand of the empress, your notice was riveted with the scrutiny of a broker on the crazy old sofas gracing his painting-room."

"With the scrutiny of fond and painful reminis-

cence," replied Lady Clendennis, in a melancholy tone. "That house was once familiar to me as my own. It was formerly the residence of my friend, the beautiful Lady Stratherne; and had not an alteration in the numbers deceived me, I should not have entered it on any casual errand."

"Of Lady Stratherne!" I exclaimed. "Could that gloomy, tasteless den be the abode of a person I have heard mentioned in terms of such rapturous admiration, as the gayest, and fairest, and frailest of the beauties of Ranelagh?"

"Tasteless and gloomy are comparative terms. Fifty years ago, when our squares were sheep-folds, and the Park an orchard, there were few better or more elegantly appointed private houses in the metropolis, than poor Ambrazani's lodgings. All our luxury and progress in the decorative arts are of recent growth; as your recollections of Buckingham House, and your present view of the old palace of St. James's, must suffice to prove. My interest in its faded and unrenovated furniture arose, however, less from any critical philosophy, than from its association in my mind with a thousand scenes of intense and mournful interest, in which I was at once a spectatress and an actress. How strange, how appalling, to see whole generations swept before us into the grave, with all those mighty passions so uncontrollable during their mortal career,—and already forgotten as if their sorrows had been endured, their struggles over-mastered in vain!—Yet a few years, and I—the last witness of that domestic tragedy—shall be in my coffin;—and my remembrances buried in the bottomless pit of oblivion!"

"True!" said I, willing to incite her to communicativeness. "Ambrazani's furniture will find its way to some old worm-eaten depository of second-hand goods; the house will be pulled down to make way for a better; and the very shadow of the shade of your friend—the last echo of the 'trumpet with a silver sound' that celebrated the beauties and follies of Lady Stratherne—have died away. But should this be?—From century to century, mankind is taught to weep over the sacrifice of Virginia, or thrill while the knife of Medea is suspended over her innocent children; though on every side scenes of *modern* tragedy are enacted, in which

the fatal influence of human passion implies that the dispensation vouchsafed for the purification of the moral world, has been bestowed in vain."

It was to this conversation, and the recollections freshened in the mind of Lady Clendennis by many an hour passed in the old house during the progress of the miniature, that I am indebted for the following narrative.

Family disputes—too intricate with chancery suits and female resentments to be worth recounting,—detained me in the seclusion of an uneventful country life from the period of my mother's death till I had more than attained my majority. Educated in the neighbourhood of London, with so limited a number of the daughters of the nobility that our little household disdained to call itself a school, I returned no more to the metropolis till, in the dangerous dawn of womanhood, I was required to preside over my father, Lord Chester's establishment. He was a man absorbed in politics and clubs; caring very little and seeing very little of our house in Grosvenor Square, so long as his other house—*the* House was open; while his sister, Lady Hereward, the person delegated to initiate my rusticity into the customs and usances of the fashionable world, was too much of a valetudinarian and too innately selfish, to renounce her personal ease for the duty of accompanying me into society. She contented herself with making me the companion of her daily drives from the bird-fancier's and lace-menders to the dealers in old china and japan; haranguing me by the way on the awkwardness of my demeanour, the Anglicized fashion of my dress, the matter-of-fact simplicity of my discourse, and my total ignorance of the forms of a circle which, to her own knowledge, I had never entered. She was fond of talking of the gay world;—describing the balls at Almack's, and the pleasures of Ranelagh;—then, just when my girlish fancy was delirious with a vision of stars, and garters, feathers, hoops, and diamond girandoles, would consign me to my cheerless home, and return to the joys of hers—an aviary of avordivats, and a potion "as before" of Hoffman's elixir.

One fine morning at the beginning of spring, some extraordinary impulse of energy induced poor Lady Here-

ward to quit her chariot in the ring, and leaning upon my arm, supervize the frisky sports with which her obese spaniel attempted to welcome the return of summer by rolling upon the sooty herbage of the park; and as I was casting a melancholy glance on the laborious liveliness of poor Phyllis, and reflecting on the drowsy quartette formed by the indolent dowager, her pampered footman, toddling dog, and dispirited niece, we were passed by a phaeton, the brilliant style of which attracted my attention.

It was driven by a distinguished-looking man, in the prime of life; by whose side lounged one of the very loveliest figures I ever beheld. I know not whether I were most struck by the beauty of the countenance shaded by her spreading hat, or by the intelligent smile, varying from compassion to recognition, with which she surveyed me. The smile was followed by a half-doubting bow, before I was able to retrace in the beautiful stranger a favourite companion of my youth. But while the phaeton rolled onwards amid the volumes of dust which, previously to the introduction of water-carts, deteriorated so much the pleasures of the ring, she repeatedly kissed her hand with an air of delighted surprise.

"You are acquainted, then, with Lady Stratherne?" exclaimed my aunt, as we hobbled along. "By what strange interposition of the Devonshire pixies, did she ever find her way to the banks of the Dart?"

"Lady Stratherne? Oh, no!—That is Lady Isabella Fitzmaurice,—who was for some years my companion under the care of Madame Galiardin."

"And who is now the reigning queen of modern fashion. I congratulate you, my dear Sophia!—You must renew your acquaintance with your friend; she will perhaps good-naturedly take upon herself some of those duties which my brother has so inconsiderately charged upon my shoulders. As if it were possible for a woman in my state of health, without half a nerve left, to go racketing about night after night."

"But, my dear aunt, how will Isabella ever find me out?—Are you acquainted with her?"

"Of course! Lady Stratherne occupies a place in society which renders it necessary we should be acquainted. I know her intimately;—that is to say, as

well as one ever knows people in London. We send each other cards once a-year; and if I were still mingling in the crowds of the great world, we should also exchange courtesies;—as it is, we have never met."

"Then what chance have I that she will discover my abode in this wide wilderness of London?"

"You really talk, Lady Sophia, as if Lord Chester's residence were as much a matter of mystery as that of some disbanded Captain of the Train Bands. Pray learn to entertain a more becoming sense of your own dignity."

"Believe me, I shall feel the very highest respect for it, should it bring about a meeting between Isabella Fitzmaurice and myself."

And a speedy opportunity occurred for my performance of the promise. On the following day, Isabella—gay and gracious and affectionate as when we enacted Helena and Hermia together over our Italian grammar,—was seated in my dreary apartment, reproaching me with my tardiness in acquainting her with my residence in town.

"Do not fancy, dear Sophy," said she, "that you have brought your blue eyes to London for no better purpose than to sit in this desolate drawing-room, knotting fringe. By the by, who was that hideosity of a chaperon with whom you were making yourself ridiculous yesterday, for the entertainment of the Park?"

"My aunt, Lady Hereward;—an acquaintance, I fancy, of your ladyship's," said I, swelling with offended dignity.

"No! my ladyship has not the slightest acquaintance with any person capable of such deliberate quizzicality. But what has she to do with you;—and what have you to do with yourself?"

"To the first question I must answer *every thing*,—to the last, *nothing!* Lady Hereward has been commissioned by my father to preside over my pleasures; and the manner in which she acquits herself of the task leaves me to the resource of the knotting shuttle which so grievously moves your disdain."

"And are you happy, Sophy, in this semi-existent state of enjoyment?" inquired Lady Stratherne, acquiring for a moment a more serious cast of countenance.

"Happy?—no, indeed!"

Her face brightened at the prospect of a partner in that lassitude of discontent and *ennui*, which I then regarded as the mere *entr'acte* of a life of pleasure.

"I would give worlds to return to Devonshire," said I; "where, though condemned to a monotonous mode of existence and the control of two rigid maiden aunts, I had at least the enjoyments of a country life—air, exercise, and leisure—undisturbed by the trammels and rumours of the great world."

"—By Lady Hereward and her dropsical lapdog. Well! well! waste not a breath in farther murmurs. You belong to *me* now;—in token of which exchange of suzerainty, I carry you off in triumph to dine with me; that I may gratify my pride with the exhibition of my little dominion, including my loving lord and my little girls. Prepare yourself to be enchanted with us all."

"Very willingly. But I fear, dear Isabella! I must defer the process of enchantment till I have spoken to my father. It is not impossible he may return home to dinner."

"But it is quite impossible he should have the honour of Lady Sophia Meredyth's company. No, no!—I will leave a note for him, and explain every thing."

Nothing appeared so strange to me as the easy self-possession with which Isabella disposed of the authority of a person so awful in my estimation:—"Are you, then, acquainted with my father?"

"He knows me; which is quite as much to the purpose. Once a year he honours the gathering together of the political menagerie at our table; and twice or thrice as often, we look at each other with a trifling gesture of recognition, at some ministerial squeeze. Assure yourself he will be delighted to find that you have fallen into my hands. No one keeps a more accurate tariff of the thrones and dominions of fashionable life, than our good Lord Chester."

The idea that my father could be "delighted" by any circumstance involving the interests of my neglected self, served to amuse me while I was preparing to accompany Isabella; and in a few minutes we were in her blue *vis-a-vis* (such at that epoch was the flagrant taste for a showy equipage,) dashing along Brook Street at a rate which would have terrified Lady Hereward beyond all redemption from the aid of Hoffman's elixir.

I was, indeed, as she predicted, enchanted with the fairy realm governed by Lady Stratherne;—with her beautiful children, her brilliant establishment, the little knot of eminent wits and politicians assembled at her table; and, above all, with the indescribable grace of demeanour and playfulness of mind, with which she acted as mistress of its ceremonies. In the evening, when we were at length left alone,—by the prolongation of those hospitable orgies which were wont, fifty years ago, to introduce a reeling Prince into the circle of St. James's, a reeling legislator to the benches of St. Stephen's, and a reeling Cato to the boards of Drury,—Isabella stretched herself at full length upon that ponderous sofa on which you were seated this morning; and with half-closed eyes proceeded to interrogate me, touching my impressions of her and hers.

"You find me much changed, dear Sophia, since we parted at poor old Galiardin's?"—

"Eucharis expanded into Calypso."

"A very classical illustration; and originating, I suppose, in my recurrence to the school-room.—By the way, let me caution you, dearest! against appearing *precious* in the eyes of the wicked wits you will meet in my set. Let them but affix some malicious epithet to your name, and your chances of success in *our* world —'*the* world'—are over at once and for ever."

"Believe me I am quite unambitious of the distinctions it is empowered to grant. Success!—you talk as of the *debut* of an actress."

"I talk like other reasonable beings; none but idiots or philosophers presume to despise the voice of society, or hold themselves above the tone of the times. The men whose suffrage I forewarn you to propitiate, are persons who lead the opinion of our own day, and——"

"As you please!—I will not dispute this prerogative," said I, "nor am I likely to provoke their animosity by assuming the tone of the Hotel de Rambouillet. The wonderful rumours which reach Devonshire of your blue-stocking club, your Mrs. Montagues and Mrs. Veseys,—your Mrs. Delanys and Mrs. Grevilles,—your Miss Talbots and Mrs. Carters, have not inspired me with the least curiosity to enter, even as a spectator, their *bureaux d'esprit*. But you appear tired, dear Lady Stratherne: were I not here, you would, perhaps, retire

to rest without waiting for the re-appearance of these barbarians?"

"Rest!" cried Isabella, laughing, "I am lying here only to recruit my strength for the vigils of the night. At eleven, I go to Lady Delaville's; and if to-morrow's sun should not still find me at the Pharo-table, it will do less than any of its predecessors for the last fortnight!"

"Pharo!" cried I in dismay; "at *your* age!—I imagined such diversions belonged to the dowager era of Lady Hereward and her *clique.*"

"Lady who?—the lady of the lapdog?—No, no! the genius of a woman of *her* years and dimensions should never extend beyond the sad sobriety of whist. But enough of play and players! I see nothing else all night; for the love of charity, let me talk of something else during the day. Tell me, Sophy; what do you think of Lord Stratherne?"

"I long to disappoint you by acknowledging less than the truth of my admiration; but I must not affect to frown on *all* your predilections. In one word, then, I think him the best looking, best mannered, and most distinguished man I have seen since my arrival in town."

"Which implies, perhaps, that you have left some person equally handsome and equally fascinating at the other extremity of Dartmoor? Ah! by your consciousness I find I have shot home;—right in the bull's-eye, by Cupid and all his arrows! or a blush never yet spoke truth. But I will not ask your confidence, in order that some day or other it may come begging for my acceptance.

"In the mean time, you must rest contented with my opinion that Lord Stratherne has quite the air of a hero of romance; and that you do wrong in renouncing his company for that of Pam or the Red Nine."

CHAPTER II.

Chez ella en ses emplois l'aube du lendemain
Souvent la trouve encore les cartes à la main!
Alors pour se coucher les quittant, non sans peine,
Elle plaint le malheur de la nature humaine,
Qui veut en un sommeil où tout s'ensevelit
Tant d'heures sans jouer se consumer au lit!

BOILEAU.

FROM that evening the acquaintance, thus cavalierly renewed, was maintained by all the assiduities of fashionable friendship; at "opera, park, and play," I was the constant companion of the worshipped wife of Lord Stratherne. In her private circle I had an opportunity of meeting almost all the eminent men of the day. Fox, Fitzpatrick, Sheridan, Walpole, Boothby, St. Leger, the young Duke of Ancaster—even the Prince himself—delighted to court the smiles of one of the most fascinating women who ever swayed the sceptre of Fashion.

My father, mean while, absorbed in the duties and pleasures of office, forming part of the machinery of the state, and accessible to no anxieties but such as could be discussed in Council, or were connected with the Order of the Day,—was perfectly satisfied to know me under the protection of a woman, the name of whose lord belonged to the ministerial majority, and who was herself especially distinguished by the favour of their majesties; and perhaps the contentment with which he contemplated my own connexion with Lady Stratherne, was not abated by the knowledge that a certain Lord Clendennis formed part of her coterie, who was supposed to regard me with attention. For my own part, I thought myself only too fortunate in exchanging the hypochondriac and tedious society of Lady Hereward, her apothecary and her Phyllis, for that of so cheerful and affectionate a companion as Isabella, for the endearments of her beautiful children, and the courtesies of her lord.

Were I, even now, to specify the most distinguished man with whom I ever associated, it would be Lord Stratherne. Bred in the school of diplomacy, his man-

ners were, however, as chilling as they were graceful: his smoothness was the smoothness of ice; and he was a person to justify the distinction imagined by Talleyrand—of being "*creux*" rather than "*profond.*" In all his thoughts and actions, however he might strive to assume an air of frankness, there seemed to lurk some *arriere pensee;* and it was impossible to feel on a confidential footing with one who evidently bestowed *his* confidence upon no human being. As a public man, he had the reputation of ability and integrity; but in private life, there was too much of the politician in his demeanour to make him an object of cordial regard. To me, as the husband of my friend, he was peculiarly agreeable, from the undeviating courtesy with which he marked the progress of my domestication in her society; but I felt that in the place of Lady Stratherne I should have been dissatisfied with the limited terms of confidence existing between them. In friendship, indeed, a species of reserve may prevail without exciting suspicion, or repelling attachment, for ties must still exist superior to its claims;—but, in love, the whole heart should be opened; not a dark or mysterious spot can be suffered to disguise the heart of either party, without producing a corresponding eclipse of the brightness of affection. In love, it must be all or nothing: reserve on a single point creates mistrust in all.

It was to this want of confidence I was soon tempted to attribute the limited influence exercised by Lord Stratherne over the character and conduct of Isabella. His attractions, both mental and personal, were such as might have justified uncompromising devotion on the part of a wife; but instead of that absorption in domestic attachments which generally follows a happy marriage, she made no secret of her distaste for the monotony of home, or of the necessity of the excitement of flattery and admiration to the maintenance of her cheerfulness. Instead of displaying the brilliant originality of her mind in conversation with a person so worthy to appreciate and improve its powers as Stratherne, who would turn the brightness of her spirit upon any trifler who was disposed to sport in its sunshine. She had a playful word, a radiant smile, for all who courted their dispensation under the banners of fashion;—she was admired, worshipped, talked of, dreamed of;

—nor did she affect to despise the tribute of all this glaring popularity. But as my experience of the world increased, and I grew more observant of the habits of her celebrated coterie as contrasted with those of society at large, it struck me that I could detect a tone of familiarity in the address of her admiring associates, such as became neither the eminence of her position as the wife of Lord Stratherne, nor the superiority of her own endowments. Her set of friends, composed it is true of the first characters of the day, appeared to regard Isabella, her interests, opinions, and feelings, more as the property of the community, than as entitled to that holy reverence which ought to surround the wife of an honourable man,—a matron and the mother of children. There was nothing of levity in her conduct (as far as it was observable to myself) which justified this degradation. When I accompanied her to Ranelagh, or the Opera,—to a ball at the Duchess of Cumberland's, or at Devonshire House,—Lord Stratherne was not only of the party, but in vigilant attendance upon Isabella; nay, he even shared with the other men of wit and fashion collected around her, the liveliness of her repartees and the fascination of her smiles. But that he was content to *share* a treasure so indisputably and sacredly his own was, according to my view of his character, a mystery.

Perhaps my consciousness of Isabella's coquetry and disapproval of Stratherne's tacit concurrence, might be somewhat influenced by the devotion by which I conceived Lord Clendennis to be attached to her car of triumph. It is true that during the intervals of her capricious favour, he never failed to seek refuge by *my* side, and exhibit his discontent in little involuntary ebullitions of vexation against the whimsical Isabella.

"I cannot understand," he exclaimed one day, when having dined with us, he followed me with his coffee-cup in his hand to Lady Stratherne's boudoir, "what tie of friendship is sufficiently strong to connect a person of *your* grave studious disposition with our fair hostess."

"Are we not told that the strongest affinity exists between bodies the most dissimilar?"

"I asked you for an answer,—not an illustration. Tell me, I beseech you, how Lady Sophia Meredyth—

whom I see making a daily sacrifice of her time to the amusement and instruction of those little girls to whose very existence Lady Stratherne appears insensible, who passes so many hours in silence and study, who tastes even the cup of pleasure with so sparing an appetite, who devotes, in short, her blameless life to the fulfilment of its duties,—can cherish an affection for a heartless coquette,—a callous mother, and——"

"Hush, hush!" I exclaimed; "I must not allow the mortification with which you have been watching Isabella's tête-à-tête yonder with Colonel Fitzpatrick, to stimulate you into the utterance of such treasons!—You have drawn a very flattering fancy-picture of Lady Sophia Meredyth; but though she is quite ready to accept all the picturesque domestic virtues with which you surround her in your sketch, there can be no occasion to portray her friend environed by attributes as hideous as those of St. Anthony in his temptation. Both pictures are exaggerated."

"You suffer me, at least, to honour that purity of taste which preserves you uninfected by the infatuation alluring your friend, night after night, to the precincts of the gaming-table."

"I have already warned you that I have no ear for acrimonious epithets, when applied to Lady Stratherne. I now assure you that in this instance you overrate my merit. It is not the forbearance of principle which ensures my avoidance of play; but an innate dislike to cards, and a total distaste for all transactions connected with money."

"Well—well! I see it is useless to canonize you in spite of yourself. Since you persist in proving yourself a sinner, wear your sackcloth and welcome; but for the sake of all who love you, Lady Sophia, and all you love, do not suffer yourself to be drawn into this vortex of folly and dissipation. Our coterie wears a flattering aspect to the world; its laugh rings merrily,—its witticisms pass into proverbs,—its whims into fashions;—but believe me there exists more real vexation of spirit among us, than in any similar number of persons——"

"Excepting the critics of some popular review—the spinsters of some populous pump-room,—or the candidates for some official vacancy," cried Lady Stratherne, who had approached us unobserved during our dialogue. "Clendennis!—by your guilty looks I am persuaded Sophy has been abusing me, and warning you

against the deadly sins of your vocation as my *Chevelier*. I trust you have betrayed the abhorrence of her treachery by tilting valiantly in my defence?" she continued, with an arch smile, proving that she was tolerably aware of the true state of the case. "Well, good people! I must do you the justice to say you look sufficiently ashamed of your vile confederacy; and had I not unfortunately rendered my character public property, by thrusting myself so conspicuously on the stage of society, I should tremble to see it in your hands. But *basta!* Sound the alarm for hats and mantles. I have a note from his Royal Highness, requesting us to meet him at Covent Garden, with St. Leger and Colonel Fitzwilliam, to assist in supporting Lady Wallace's comedy of 'The Ton.' The carriages are ordered; Sophy, my dear, on with your cardinal! Time and tide and the green curtain wait for no man."

Lady Stratherne was too thoughtless a creature for the shadows of suspicion to darken her mind for more than one distrustful minute. Leaning on the arm of the Prince of Wales, upon whose promising youth the eye of the public rested at that period with the most partial affection,—she entered the crowded theatre with the glowing flush of gratified vanity bright on her cheek: her eye wandering from box to box, while her ear hung enraptured on the insinuating accents of the most graceful of royal flatterers; and her heart—but who shall venture to penetrate the views and wishes and emotions of a female heart, unsubmitted to the governance of principle?—

But all this sunshine was evanescent. Isabella's smiles were not those of the genial summer of the soul. Her joyous glance would suddenly expire in vacancy, as if the happy impulse from whence it sprang had withered. A sigh would intrude amid the badinage of her gayest narratives,—*not* of the kind which swells forth from the overcharged emotions of a heart at ease,—but harsh,—abrupt,—reproachful,—*self*-reproachful! Sometimes Isabella was heard to check her lovely girls in a tone of peevish irritation, in the midst of their childish endearments; and though she had sufficient command over herself to forbear venting her ill-humour on the stately Stratherne, it is probable that she did not love him the more for placing this restraint upon her feelings. Yes! it was evident that she was unhappy.

But what could originate her distress?—Young, beautiful, prosperous, beloved, no vulgar cares of life could reach her favoured career; every blessing, every gift, was hers which a doting mother would pray to Heaven to lavish upon her child. Yet she was certainly unhappy. The season was drawing towards its close; and Lord Stratherne had promised to meet the Spencers and several others of Isabella's noble friends at Spa. It was a prospect she might have delighted in; for she was partial to the unceremonious habits of the continent, and had often described to me with fervour the beauties of Eastern Flanders, and the reunion of foreign friends which had already more than once converted the woods of Luxembourg into fairy-land under her direction. Yet though she succeeded in obtaining my father's consent that I should be of the party, and had preassured herself of my own by the flattering picture she presented me of its attractions, I plainly discerned that some jarring string completely marred the harmony of the project.

We shall have a charming boating party on the Meuse, my dear Sophy! You, who are an euthusiast of the days of chivalry, shall visit all the old castles, from the battlemented ruins of Huy, to the scarped rocks of Chouquiers; and we will ride through the Ardennes, as if the ancient courts of Hainault and Brabant had resuscitated their knights and dames for masque of the olden time. Ah! Sophy—make the most of such enjoyments! Short is time,—very short,—*too* short,—in which the tranquil idleness of our hearts and minds, enables us to seek amusement from such blameless sources!"

"You are not fond of drawing-room philosophy, or I would attempt to demonstrate that hearts and minds at ease *seek* no amusement. They accept it when it presents itself; but perfect contentment is far too indolent for the labour of pleasure."

"Spare me your logical definitions! I scarcely know whether I have got a mind, and do not care to make the discovery."

"At least you will tell me why Lady Stratherne, the veriest butterfly of this painted parterre of London society, affects, at times, the meditative glance of the bird of darkness,—or rather the moping——"

"Metaphors are worse than metaphysics! But if, in simple prose, you desire to know why I am occasionally

out of spirits, and still more frequently out of temper, know that—like the man in the play—I have to

"Thank the gods that I'm not worth a ducat!"

cleared out—ruined—beggared—disgraced!—Yes, Sophia;—I live in dread of hearing my continental tour upbraided as an escape from unpaid debts of honour, and clamorous creditors."

"Good heavens!—Can it be possible that Lord Stratherne——"

"Is as regular and solvent as a chancellor of the Exchequer, buoyed up on the bubble of the national debt! No—no;—Stratherne has nothing to do with *my* budget and its distresses. His agent pays me, to an hour and a farthing, my quarterly pittance of five hundred a-year; wondering how 'my lady' can manage to expend so prodigious a sum on the purchase of her pins; and little suspecting that 'my lady's' pins have been unpaid these five years past, and that her revenue is pledged to her play debts for five years come.—Heigho!"

"But, my dearest Isabella,—why have you never mentioned this subject to me before? I am very rich," said I, blushing with the embarrassment of making a pecuniary offer.

"Thanks, thanks! my dear child—but you know nothing of the extent of these miseries; and the two or three fifty pound notes which you hoard in your housewife-case, smelling of maréchal powder, and looking as fresh as when they were presented to the dear babe by its godmamma on its birth-day, would do no more than appease the savage demands of the wretch who travels once a-day from the Exchange to pester me for the price of yonder old lacquer screen. No! dearest Sophy!—keep your treasury untouched for the temptation of a Flander's head. Valenciennes,—Lille,—Malines,—Point de Bruxelles!—think of the yards of perdition, and ells of prodigality, which will be unfolded before your inexperienced eyes during our tour of the Netherlands."

"I am half inclined to be affronted with your disparaging view of my finances," said I, readily detecting her intention of distracting my notice from the original subject, and the confession which had unawares escaped her, —"but when I told you I was rich, I referred to no birth-day tokens of godmotherly love. I have at my absolute

disposal five thousand pounds; bequeathed me by a maiden aunt whom my father disliked too much even to interfere with her legacy. As much of this sum as will cover your debts is much at your service."

"Sophia! what do I hear?" exclaimed Lady Stratherne, jumping up from the sofa on which she was extended, and seizing me wildly by the hand. "Do you mean to say that you both *can* and *will* furnish me with fifteen hundred pounds?"

"With the sincerest pleasure; but upon a condition that will, I fear, invalidate your pleasure in the loan——"

"That I cease to play the fool with Clendennis?"

"No! Isabella;—upon condition that you cease to play the fool with your own happiness and respectability. You must promise to renounce the gaming-table!"

"Ahi, ahi, ahi!—what a ferocious clause in so delightful a treaty! Sophy—Sophy!—know that your gambler, like your lover, becomes only the more attached to his idol for the ill usage he receives; and at this very moment, when I am pushed by lansquenet into the very jaws of ruin, I can scarcely bear the thought of extricating myself at the price of an eternal farewell."

"My dear, dear Lady Stratherne!—dismiss this childish self-abandonment on an occasion of so much importance. For the sake of a husband and children by whom you are tenderly beloved, renounce so ruinous, so humiliating a woakness!"

"Ay, there's the rub!—had I indeed a husband by whom I was tenderly beloved, I should not have sought refuge from the blank vacancy of home, in the excitements of play. But I do not wish to involve you in that most wearisome and egotistical of all discussions, the chapter of matrimonial grievances. Since business is to be the order of the day, let us confine ourselves as religiously to pounds, shillings, and pence, as Lord Chester himself on a finance committee."

"You promise me, then?"

"Alas, my kind good Sophia, I do!—and did you but know, in sober sadness, the mortification and wretchedness—the restless nights and anxious days which my embarrassments have obliged me to pass, you would marvel at my having hesitated for the most impossible fraction of a minute. Here is my hand upon the bargain."

"And mine! But you must still endure the delay of

a few days. I do not keep my aunt Margaret's legacy in the housewife-case scented with maréchal powder; but by return of communication from my Exeter banker, the fifteen hundred pounds shall be yours."

"I have accepted the generous offer too precipitately," said Isabella, after musing for a few minutes. "I have but five hundred a-year; and after limiting myself to the strictest necessaries, I should require four years to discharge the debt. In the mean time, you will marry——"

"And if I do, you shall satisfy your scruples by paying me interest upon this enormous obligation. Till then,—and believe me, Isabella, I have no intention of accelerating the epoch,—my father's extreme liberality places me above all reference to my banker's book at Exeter."

I was almost shocked by the inconsiderate gaiety displayed by Lady Stratherne in the course of that evening. Released from the immediate pressure of her difficulties, her spirits rose to the most extravagant height. An unnatural brilliancy streamed from her eyes; her steps appeared unconscious of the earth; and her sallies excited a correspondent spirit of mirth in our little society. There was a masquerade at the Pantheon, previously to which masks were to be received at the Duchess of Gordon's;—and as she advanced into the throng upon the arm of the youthful Duke of Ancaster, the most distinguished-looking man of the assembly, I heard her pointed out by a hundred different voices—"There goes the beautiful Lady Stratherne,—the wittiest and loveliest woman in England,—the happiest,—the most beloved. Who—who—would not be Lady Stratherne?"

CHAPTER III.

Les mœurs des gens du monde, sans passion, sans autre occupation que celle de s'amuser, et d'autant, plus difficiles à peindre d'une manière interéssante, qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes sans couleur, et assez insipides. GRIMM.

SPA was a very charming place in those days. The world was not so easily shamed out of the enjoyment of simple pleasures as in our own fastidious times. We were roused in the morning by the serenades of the Odenwald glee-singers; then, hurrying through our toilet, were re-

ceived at the springs by a group of flower-women, the celebrated *bouquetieres* of Tirlemont;—performed our pilgrimage to the Géronstère spring, on a herd of shaggy ponies of the Ardennes, enlisted by Lord Clendennis for our use; dined early that we might enjoy a lounge in the *Promenade de sept heures*, previously to adjourning to the *Redoute* for the evening: and (unless when a formal *fete priee* was given by one of the Prussian princes, or the Archduchess Christina, who occasionally inhabited her beautiful villa at the entrance of the valley, the formalities of full-dress were banished. Our party, which consisted of several English families of our own circle, besides those of the Prince de Montfaucon, the Duc de Luxembourg, and the Maréchal de la Roche-Aymon, enjoyed all the cheerful ease of the most private *coterie*, combined with the brilliancy and spirit of a fashionable watering-place.

The Redoute, a temple of pleasure uniting the saloons devoted to dancing, music, and gambling, with the public theatre, was frequented as a daily promenade by visiters of every degree; nor were our English beauties of that period too exclusive to mix in the throng, and hazard their louis-d'ors alternately against those of a reigning prince and a chevalier d'industrie. On our first arrival, I own I dreaded the temptation thus afforded to my friend; but an *ordonnance* had recently been issued by the Prince Bishop of Liège, placing heavy restrictions on the gaming-tables, and, for her own part, she evinced little interest in their proceedings. Sauntering through the saloon on the arm of Sir Charles G——, Lord Frederick C——, Lord Clendennis, or some other gentleman of our party, and having overlooked the tables for a minute or two *en passant*, she would occasionally indulge in a trifling bet at the persuasion of her companions, then playfully insist on flying from the unhallowed region. Evening after evening she quitted the Pharo-table to listen to one of Glück's operas, screeched in the adjoining theatre by the Belgic *corps operatique*, (which was patriotically patronized by the Imperial Governess of the Netherlands, and transported from Brussels to excoriate the ears of the invalids La Géronstère,) or to music of a still higher order, in the wit of Hare, and the philosophy of Burke. It was, indeed, gratifying to my feelings to observe the victory thus obtained over her injurious propensities.

Mean while, notwithstanding the admirable organization of our little party, there were two members whose absence would have been an improvement according to *my* estimate of their attractions. These were the Princesse de Montfaucon, and the young Comte d'Isenbourg, the head of a family of great antiquity in the Palatinate;—the former of whom I disliked, no less from the insolent assumption of her manners, than because I plainly discerned her to be the enemy of Lady Stratherne; while the latter was still more unwelcome as a strenuous suitor to myself. But my prejudices against both were very soon eclipsed by the unspeakable disgust which possessed my mind on the arrival of a certain Prince Ernest of Rittersfeld, also a subject of Charles Theodore, but for some time past a diplomatic resident at the court of France. There was something in the effeminate regularity of this man's beauty and the refined affectation of his manners, which afforded a revolting contrast to the vices of which he boasted, and the defiance of all principle and good-feeling apparent in the brilliant sallies by which he drew forth the applause of the fashionables of Spa. It was not surprising that the *ami de cœur* of the Chevalier de Boufflers should be a clever epigrammatist,—that the associate and scholar of Marmontel, of Mesdames d'Epinay, d'Houdelot, Geoffrin—of Grimm, Holbach, and Helvetius, should shine in the graceful pleasantries which distinguished our little circle: but it was indeed amazing that the fairest and sweetest of its ornaments should listen with an approving smile to the profligate axioms falling from lips that afforded a model for the countenance of an archangel; or that the feats of bold depravity attributed to this "easy Etherege" of the circles of the Choiseuls and Grammonts, were rehearsed by those who should have trembled at the recital. Prince Ernest was without exception the handsomest man I ever beheld, and the least prepossessing.

Such, however, was not the opinion of Lady Stratherne. She had become intimately acquainted with him in her frequent visits to Paris; and no sooner was he installed in his apartments in our hotel, than Lord Clendennis and the rest of our English beaux were tacitly dismissed from their attendance. It was on Prince Ernest's arm that she clambered up the rude ascents of the woods of Montjou on occasion of a pic-nic given by Prince Albert

of Saxe Teschen, and explored the marble quarries of Theux. It was Prince Ernest who guided her horse through the dikes, and over the stone fences which interrupted the road on our expedition to the cascade at Coo, and the heights of Steffen. Prince Ernest opened the public ball with her, given on the departure of the Archduchess; Prince Ernest sang duets with her at the Duc de Monthémar's illuminated supper at the Waux Hall.

But from the period of this excessive intimacy the sociability of our party declined. In their own defence others began a system of preference; till at length, the seven-and-thirty individuals of which the coterie was composed, broke into little parties of twos and threes,—but alas! more of the former than the latter. Lady Stratherne's unadvised *engouement* for Rittersfeld, seemed to have given a signal for the general disunion and particular union of our party. For a few days succeeding the change of affairs, I fancied that Lord Clendennis was more assiduous than usual in his attentions to myself. But the flattering illusion soon vanished. He resumed the sort of froward petulance with which, for some time past, he had taken the liberty of demeaning himself when we were thrown together by the chances of society; and I was left to the homage and escort of Comte Isenbourg, whom I liked too well as an acquaintance not to detest as a lover. His conversation was amusing,—but I could not listen and applaud without encouraging pretensions I was by no means inclined to sanction; and finding myself, by the common consent of the party, appropriated to him as a partner and associate, I was constantly obliged to secure the courtesies of the old Prince de Montfaucon, or any other man to whom I could address myself without incurring the charge of coquetry.

I have forgotten all this time to tell you,—what the course of my narrative may have implied,—that Lord Stratherne was not of the expedition to Spa. The session of Parliament not having terminated when we quitted England, towards the close of May, he promised to be with us soon after the birthday; then excused himself on the plea of a visit to Windsor; and again and again, a period was fixed for his arrival, and as often postponed. Long before the installation of the Prince of Rittersfeld as *chevalier d'honneur* to Lady Stratherne, it was plain to me that she had renounced all expectation, and that

her lord had never entertained any intention of making his appearance. I was provoked by his prolonged absence; I certainly should not have quitted England in company with my giddy friend, had I not been led to anticipate the protection of her husband. But it was now too late to repent my precipitancy.

"*Et ce cher mari qu'on annonce toujours, et qui n'arrive jamais!*" said the Princesse de Montfaucon one night when I had interrupted her tête-à-tête with Count d'Oultremont, by attaching myself to her side in order to escape the importunities of Isenbourg. "What news of Milord by to-day's post? Is he still on the eve of embarkation?—Or has Great Britain again suffered a relapse, so that his valuable services cannot be spared from the consultation of her physicians?"

"My father, Lord Chester, writes me word," said I, indignantly, "that Lord Stratherne's presence cannot just now be dispensed with. In England it is not the custom for the functions of a minister of state to give way to the claims of a party of pleasure. We are told they manage such things better in France."

"They *manage* nothing better in France, *ma belle enfant*," cried the Princess, in a tone of contempt. "*En fait de chicane*, whether of the cabinet or the ball-room, an *affaire de cœur*, or an affair of honour,—I will back the simple *gobemouches* of the Thames for a good score or two of Brabant crowns, against all Europe and half Asia. There is no art so artificial as that which arrays itself in the garb of nature; and the unsophistication of your true John Bull, resembles that of the expert knave who assumes a fustian jacket and patois to enable him to pick your pocket. Don't look affronted!—France too has her Cartouches and Mandrins; but they pursue their vocation in lace and embroidery."

"But *we* were talking of ministers of state," said Count d'Oultremont,—a matter-of-fact Fleming, who, while he worshipped the beauty of Madame de Montfaucon, was altogether below the proof of her Parisian raillery.

"*C'est egal!*" said the incorrigible Princess. "The assumed *bonhommie* which seals the eyes of a nation, or the eyes of a wife, is but the same cunning simplicity."

"I would double the wager just offered by Madame la Comtesse," said Isenbourg, amazed by her uncourteous

virulence, "to discover through what quarter she has been piqued into this animosity. I am trying to remember the names of all the lovely Englishwomen, all the fine, frank, bluff young Englishmen I meet at Paris, to ascertain which can be the recreant knight, which the fatal rival, who has excited the Princess of Montfaucon into so vehement an Anglophobia."

"You will soon have occasion to refresh your memory. I conclude you accompany Miladi Sophie et Madame de Straterne to Paris?"

"Pardon me, madam; we have no thoughts of visiting Paris," said I, coldly.

"*We!*—Am I at liberty to guess who, which, or what, constitutes your first person plural?—Young ladies, I am aware, are not allowed to affect a first person singular: and unless your thoughts incline you to remain at Spa with Monsieur d'Isenbourg, while Prince Ernest and Miladi Straterne perform their pilgrimage to Sainte Geneviéve, I fancy the 'we' must be retracted, and my original declaration confirmed."

"*Has* Lady Stratherne any intention of returning to England by way of Paris?" inquired Lord Clendennis, laying down the *Mercure*, which had hitherto appeared to engross his attention.

"None, I assure you," said I. "We are even pledged to visit the Archduchess on our way through Brussels; and have engaged the Tyroliers to attend us on the Meuse, from Liège to Namur."

"More English simplicity!" cried the Princess, lifting her hands in affected astonishment. "Monsieur d'Isenbourg, tell me, I beseech you, like an honest man and a *preux chevalier*, does not the party of Miladi quit us for Baden next week? And have you not promised to give them a *Ritterspiel* on their road, in your castle in the Rheingau?"

To my surprise, the Count bowed affirmatively; and Lord Clendennis instantly took up the *Mercure*, and pursued his studies.

"Qui de nous donc est le dupe
Tout le monde est du secret!"

cried Madame de Montfaucon, in the words of an author then in the zenith of his Parisian popularity.

"Lady Stratherne must explain all this!" I exclaimed, rising to go in search of her.

"Bah, bah!—your lovely friend detests explanations," cried the Princess, provokingly. "And why need you know any thing about it? If you do not follow up my officious hint, you may very easily contrive to mistake Aix for Liège,—Ehrenbreitstein for Huy,—Mayence for Namur. Your simplicity may even imagine, when you enter the portal of Castle Isenbourg, that you are on a visit to Madame la Gouvernante Impériale."

I forbore to reply to these taunts, lest I should gratify my tormentor with the evidence of my secret vexation. It was provoking enough that Lord Clendennis should sit there listening to so distorted a representation of facts, and by his nonchalance compel me to accept the services of the Count in seeking Lady Stratherne.

"Is it possible," whispered Isenbourg, with the most tender emphasis, the moment we were out of hearing of the others, "that you have been kept in ignorance of the honour intended me by your English friends?"

"Is it possible that *you* can doubt it?" I replied, with as much *hauteur* as I could assume.

"And yet, in forming my plans for your reception at Isenbourg, I was taught, madam, to believe that I should not have a reluctant guest in the Lady Sophia Meredyth."

"On that point," said I, "you must explain yourself with those who have thought proper to deceive you. But be assured I have not found the attractions of my sojourn at Spa sufficiently great, to induce me to prolong my stay on the continent."

"I am answered, madam," replied Count Isenbourg, in a tone of mortification. "And yet, it is hard that your disgusts against myself, your unwillingness to honour *my* residence with your presence, should deprive you of a pleasure, of which some days ago I heard you speak with interest. Lady Stratherne assures me that one of her chief inducements to visit Paris is to gratify your wish of being present at the state audience about to be accorded at Versailles to the Indian Ambassador."

"I may have expressed a desire to witness such a pageant; but merely as a child proclaims its eagerness for a new toy. Lady Stratherne can scarcely have formed her projects on so slight a temptation."

We were now in the corridor leading from the news-

room of the redoute to the grand saloon, in which I expected to find my chaperon. It was evening—*entre chien et loup*, as Madame de Montfaucon would have called it—and the passages were not yet lighted up. But I had no difficulty in perceiving that the female figure, which now rushed out of a side-door into the vestibule, was that of Lady Stratherne; or that she was closely followed by Prince Ernest, who seemed to be remonstrating with her, and imploring her return. I instantly called to her by name, and expressed my wish to go home.

"It is scarcely nine o'clock," said Prince Ernest. "The carriage is not come."

"Let us walk," said I. "We had but a short ride this morning; Lady Stratherne cannot be fatigued."

"Yes, yes! let us walk home," cried my friend. "I am not tired,—the air will refresh me." And, as she spoke, I was amazed to perceive that her voice was broken with sobs. Without having the slightest clew to the cause of her distress, I saw that this was no moment for my intended explanation; but Count Isenbourg had either less tact or less forbearance; and scarcely had we quitted the portico, when, perceiving that I chose to remain by the side of our companions instead of following them in a tête-à-tête, he suddenly exclaimed,—

"I have to regret that the hopes I was induced to form of seeing your ladyship and Lady Sophia Meredyth at Isenbourg, were so presumptuously groundless.—I find——"

"Bah!" interrupted Prince Ernest, with an affected tone of gaiety; "Isenbourg, my best of fellows!—one would imagine that you, and not I, had been apprenticed to the diplomatic craft. You wrap your smallest meaning in so many courteous words, that methinks Monsieur de Vergennes would do well to appoint you master of the ceremonies to this barbaric envoy, who has come from the east to kiss the sublime dust on the feet of the *grand monarque*. As I am a Christian man, I would ride straight from the Pouhon to my *entresol* in the Rue St. Honoré, on the cart-horse my friend d'Oultremont calls his Arabian, for the satisfaction of seeing you salaming and congéing your way through the *Salle de Mars*, with a white wand in your hand, like that of a *chambellan d'opera*."

The Prince was evidently gaining time for Lady Stratherne to recover her self-possession; but Isenbourg was not to be diverted from his object.

"As you will shortly have the good fortune to witness that ceremony as the escort of Lady Stratherne, and——"

"No—no—no!" interrupted Isabella; "I have renounced all intention of visiting Paris."

"Your ladyship will permit me to remind you," observed Isenbourg, in a tone of deep mortification, "that on the temptation of your promised visit, a large party of our mutual friends is on the point of assembling at my house; and the disappointment of my mother, who has obtained leave of absence from the Electress from her functions as *grande maitresse*, in the hope of forming the acquaintance of persons so interesting to my feelings" (he inclined his head towards me as he spoke,) "will be, if possible, greater than my own."

"I am quite aware, Monsieur le Comte, that I owe you many apologies for my seeming caprice," said Isabella, somewhat more composedly; "but believe me the change of our plans is inevitable."

"Do not say *our* plans, Isabella, lest you should induce the Count to believe me a party in those schemes, which still remain as mysterious as they are unsatisfactory."

"*Dieu! que ces jeunes tetes sont difficiles a mener!*" cried Prince Ernest. "Here is Isenbourg ready to throw us all into the Meuse, because we cannot go and admire the *creneaux* of his state prison; while Mademoiselle de Mérédit is ready to shoot us flying for having even dreamed of such a diversion."

"Decidedly, then, you do not go to Baden?" inquired the Count of Lady Stratherne, in a grave tone.

"I regret to say that the letters which reached me by to-day's courier compel my immediate return to London," faltered Isabella; a declaration which surprised me the more, as I knew no courier had arrived.

"And *you?*—" persisted Isenbourg, turning to Rittersfield.

"I?—what am I to the purpose?—Surely, my venerated friend Countess Isenbourg, does not leave Stutgardt for the purpose of doing the honours of the *chateau* to *me?*"

"Certainly not;—my mother knows you so well—so *thoroughly,*" cried the Count, with a sneer. "But as we agreed to travel from Baden back to Paris together, I——"

"Cannot do better than look out for another *compagnon de voyage. My* letters, also, compel my immediate departure for London."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Isenbourg, startled by this avowal, while I perceived, by the tremour of Isabella's frame, that she was equally unprepared for the declaration. "You—*you*—go to England; *you* visit London!" she murmured, as if from an irresistible impulse.

"I—I go to England, replied Rittersfield, in the most decided tone. "And why not?—I am scarcely worth two hundred louis in the world. In Paris they would be the property of my creditors; in London they will keep me alive for a few months."

"This is the first time I ever heard you express any anxiety on the score of your finances," observed Isenbourg, as we approached the gateway of our hotel.

"*Que voulez vous?*" cried Prince Ernest, affecting a tone of levity evidently at variance with the state of his mind, while he hummed a stanza from one of Champcenet's popular Noëls.

"De Louvois suivant les leçons,
J'ai fait des chansons et des dettes;
Les premières sont sans façons,
Mais les secondes sont bien faites.
C'est pour échapper à l'ennui
Qu'un honnête homme se derange—
Quel bien est solide aujourd'hui?
Le plus sûr est celui qu'on mange."

CHAPTER IV.

Screening, with trembling, from her fellow men
Crimes offered fearless to the Almighty's ken. CRABBE.

EAGER as I was for an interview with Isabella, I trembled when, on following her into her dressing-room, I obtained a view of her countenance. It was actually livid with horror!—no tears, no exclamations, not a word in explanation of the mysteries of the evening. She threw herself into a chair, with her eyes fixed and her hands clasped, as if unconscious of my presence.

After allowing her some minutes to regain her composure, I whispered an inquiry whether I should ring for her maid; whether I could afford her any assistance. At first Lady Stratherne made no answer; but on my reiterating the question, she pointed to her dressing-case as

if she wished me to bring it her,—although the gold toilet-set it served to contain was as usual laid out on her dressing-table. Scarcely had I obeyed the signal, when she snatched a key from her bosom, and opening the little chest, was about to swallow the contents of a phial which she took from a secret drawer.

"What are you about to do, Isabella?" said I, forcibly detaining her hand.

"Not to poison myself, Sophy,—not to poison myself!" she exclaimed, suddenly giving way to a frantic burst of laughter. "Don't be alarmed, child; be under no apprehension of hearing of an 'awful catastrophe in high life,' bruited to the world by the clamour of the English newspapers. This is but my daily portion or potion of opium; tired nature's boon restorer, balmy opium!—Cervantes was wrong to make Sancho Panza bless the man who first invented sleep; he should have inspired the clown with veneration for him who first discovered the use of anodynes."

Again she put the phial to her lips, and again I implored her to forbear. "Isabella," said I, "you are not the less guilty, that the poison to which you have recourse is slow as well as sure. You have long complained of the state of your health,—"

"No, no; not the state of my health—I never complained of my health!" cried she, passing her hand distractedly over her forehead.

"Your looks complain,—your countenance accuses you.—In London, late hours and hot rooms afford a plea for the languor by which I have seen you oppressed. But here, Isabella, here—where we retire to rest at so reasonable a time; here where daily exercise and pure air have restored us all to strength and health; I can attribute the haggardness of your looks only to sickness, or sorrow, or the horrible means of excitement you have just boasted as your refuge against both."

I was talking to the winds!—the mind of Lady Stratherne was absorbed by perplexities of its own.

"Sophy, what money have you about you?" she suddenly exclaimed.

"None—I never carry my purse to the Redoute."

"No, no! I mean here at Spa. What have you left —what—"

"I have about eighty louis at your service," said I,

anticipating the request I now foresaw. "The remainder of my store is bespoken to pay for a few Spa boxes and toys I have ordered as commissions from Lady Hereward."

"You must leave Lady Hereward's commissions to take care of themselves," was her peremptory reply. "Yes, you must!—and give me *all*,—to your last louis, your last florin!—And now tell me, are you prepared to quit Spa at a moment's warning?—Do you think that by sitting up to-night, our baggage could be packed to enable us to be off by daybreak?—*My* preparations would be easily made.—Oh! if I could but get away before he is aware of my intentions;—if I could, if I could but escape him!"

"Escape whom, my dear Isabella?"

"Rittersfield! Hush!—don't ask me why!—don't remonstrate with me. I forestall all your inquiries. I shall not utter one word of truth in reply to your questions. Only tell me how I can manage to get my affairs here arranged; only assist me in leaving this horrible place!"

"Surely so abrupt a departure will provoke a thousand injurious suspicions?"

"True; but evil report is not the thing I have most to fear."

"The delay of twenty-four hours cannot surely be productive of much mischief?"

"Why not say in two words that you will not quit Spa without an interview with Clendennis?" cried Isabella.

"You are ungenerous or distracted enough at this moment, to accuse me of any act of selfishness. On consideration, you will admit that I am ready, willing, eager, to do any thing that may contribute to your advantage. But, at present, I see none in this precipitate flight."

Lady Stratherne shook her head. "I can plainly discern," said she, "that it is Rittersfield's intention to molest me by his company in the journey. Our friends are yet unprepared to return; and how can I resist his right to travel the same road on the same day with myself!"

"But you can avoid all intercourse with him. Your own dignity will enable you to——"

"Pshaw!—dignity!—dignity against the boldness of a *roue* like Prince Ernest!"

"You must have admitted his encroachments very tame-

ly," I involuntarily exclaimed, "to have become thus submissive to his power."

"You must not measure our position," said Isabella, evading a direct reply, "by your experience of the forms of English society. "Sophy! you do not know that man;—you do not know the school of profligacy in which he has been trained;—you do not know the callous sternness of ——"

"Sternness?" cried I; "Prince Ernest, stern! He, whose every word is a jest,—every glance a smile?"

"Heaven, my poor Sophia, defend you from such mirth! Well do I remember that when I first visited Paris, I saw things, and heard them, in the manner you hear and see them now. The poor Duchess of Kingston, my aunt, (herself only too fatally versed in the deceptions and depravities of life) at that very time pointed out to my avoidance Prince Ernest and his community of Lauzuns and Richelieus. 'Light and gallant as they appear, said she, 'there breathe no darker villains;—like the tyrants of old, they conceal their iron armour under velvet and embroidery.' But why waste these precious hours in idle discussion;—let us commence our preparations."

At length, however, I persuaded her to compromise her impatience by devoting a whole day to the private fartherance of her plans,—her departure being formally announced for the end of the week. A charge of secrecy was given to her astonished servants; and without comprehending the cause of her perturbation or the aim of her concealments, I proceeded in my own arrangements for our departure. It was agreed between us that not a hint of our purpose should be given to any living soul; and that she should leave a letter for Lady E. F., who was her most intimate friend, explaining that she had played the runaway in order to evade the disagreeable ceremony of a general adieu. We were to set off before day-break on the following morning. Lord Stratherne having wisely intrusted the arrangement and defrayment of his wife's household expenditure to his maître d'hotel, who, with her suite, was to follow in the course of the day; and since it was her whim and pleasure to insist on this mysterious mode of departure, I was satisfied that no obstacle would now present itself.

It happened, unluckily, that a party of pleasure had

long been arranged to take place that morning in the ruins of the old Castle of Franchimont; a fête given by the Prince of Bentheim, who had summoned his band of wind instruments from his castle near Munster, solely to gratify a whim expressed by Lady Stratherne; nor could we absent ourselves without exciting the surmises of our friends. This was a sad trial of my presence of mind. Youth is a poor dissembler; and I was too much annoyed at quitting Spa on terms of such vexatious misunderstanding with Lord Clendennis, to assume an air of cheerfulness. Lady Stratherne, on the contrary, habituated to the task of deception, was not at all discomposed by the effort; and whatever might have been the source of her emotion on the preceding evening, all was subdued,—all past,—all seemingly forgotten on the morrow. She entered the ruined portal of Franchimont with a smile as radiant, and a costume as carefully adjusted, as if no ulterior project occupied her mind.

The scene that presented itself within was, indeed, picturesque! The Prince of Bentheim, one of the most magnificent of the Lilliputian potentates of the Empire, had been at the trouble and expense of arraying a company of his people in the ancient costume of Germany, and of fitting up the interior of the court-yard with galleries, as for a tilt of the olden time. Banners waving above the various balconies, bore the emblazonments of the most renowned houses of the Rhenish and Flemish Rittérey; and I perceived with regret, that Isabella and myself were appointed to preside in one embellished with the bearings of Isenbourg. The centre of the arena having been temporarily floored with fine turf, the amusements of the day commenced with a wrestling match after the ancient Walloon custom, exhibited by a company of Liègeois, who had precisely the air of having stepped from one of Durer's pictures. This was followed by games of quarter-staff, and shooting at the popinjay, interspersed with the exquisite performances of the Prince's band, clad in the feudal liveries of his house.

It was a lovely day in July; but so deep was the shade cast by the massive walls, that a delicious coolness pervaded the scene. The temporary galleries were covered in with a matting of fresh broom, of which the blossoms still "smelt wooingly;" while the tapestry of rich wall-flowers partially covering the hoary and decaying battle-

ments, more than rivalled their fragrance. The clear blue summer sky was over our heads,—the sound of music on the air,—and smiling faces around us;—tents appropriated to the banquet were erected round the glacis, and supplied with the most luxurious profusion:—the whole pageant wore an air of enchantment. Princess Cunegunda of Saxony, the Princes of Prussia, and the Elector of Cologne, occupied the central gallery, bearing the escutcheon and Imperial crown of Charlemagne; the rest of the tier was filled with visiters of the highest note, collected from Spa, Aix la Chapelle, and the environs. Scarcely were we seated in the prominent places pointed out for us by the Prince of Bentheim, when Madame de Montfaucon, leaning over from the adjoining balcóny, began to criticise, in an audible tone, the arrangements of the day; pointing out with contempt the wives of certain of the wealthy burghers of Düsseldorf and Cologne, who had been admitted to the entertainment.

"*Que voulez vous?*" replied Isabella. "Every large assembly ensures plebeian contact. Lordly and lowly,—gentle and simple,—English and French,—and all other rival parties and persons, who detest each other by right (or wrong) divine,—must be collected together to people such a spot as the ruins of Franchimont. In society, no less than in commercial traffic, silver and copper coin becomes as indispensable as the golden *louis d'or*."

Provoked by this ready retort, the Princess turned towards me, whom she knew by experience to be more vulnerable to her irony, imploring me to inform her of the cause of Count Isenbourg's sudden departure. "Is he gone," she inquired, "to perfect his preparations for your ladyship's reception; or had he not courage to see his own entertainment eclipsed by a liberality which would have exhausted the Isenbourg revenues for a twelvemonth to come?"

Although secretly exulting in the discovery that the last day of my unquiet sojourn at Spa was secure from the additional annoyance of his presence, I would not allow Madame de Montfaucon an unqualified triumph; but warmly taking up the defence of poor Isenbourg, exhibited a degree of ardour in his behalf, such as brought the colour into my own cheeks when, turning suddenly to Isabella, I perceived that Lord Clendennis had stationed himself between us, and that both were intently regard-

ing me. The music striking up at that moment, put an end to my embarrassment; and scarcely had it ceased, when Clendennis was again discoursing in a low voice with Lady Stratherne, whose hurried answers and air of vexation convinced me that her old friend was assuming a tone either of remonstrance or reproof. Their conversation was interrupted only when Prince Ernest of Rittersfield, (who with one or two German cavaliers of the *Ritterey*, had taken their turn among the cross-bowmen) entered the gallery, and took his station, as if by privilege of place, by the side of Isabella. I saw her change colour on his approach,—I saw her shudder when he accosted her,—I saw in the expression of his fine face the exulting sneer of a demon,—and heard in every inflection of his voice the tone of one who loves and hates, who is at once triumphant and mortified. Deeply grieved to behold the friend of my youth debased by some yet unexplained error or folly into the endurance of all this insolence, it was, indeed, a moment of release to me when the trumpeters, parading the lists, summoned us to the banquet. But Prince Ernest so instantaneously possessed himself of Isabella's arm, that Lord Clendennis could not without rudeness avoid tendering his own to my acceptance.

CHAPTER V.

Such a man is Claudio! He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turned orthographer.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALREADY dispirited by the belief that nothing could be more unacceptable than the office thus imposed on his gallantry, I lost all enjoyment of his society on perceiving Madame de Montfaucon stationed opposite to us during the banquet, with her inquisition too manifestly on the alert to admit of any conversation with Clendennis beyond common topics and the news of the day.

But scarcely was the tedious collation at an end, when he whispered a proposal that we should follow the example of two or three straggling parties, which, instead of returning to the galleries, or to the arena which was now prepared for dancing, dispersed themselves among the

footpaths that intersect the copses of underwood, sloping from the lofty ridge on which the Castle of Franchimont is situated towards the valley below. As we took our way through thickets of hazel and maple, overgrown with honeysuckles and brier roses, reminding me strongly of the banks of the Dart, I experienced the first moments of real gratification that had embellished my visit at Spa. Still, however, Clendennis was silent,—still embarrassed; and it seemed a prodigious effort over his own feelings, which at length enabled him to address me.

"You will, perhaps, consider me bold, Lady Sophia," said he, "and certainly officious, in presuming to trouble you with my observations. But though *you* have been tempted to withdraw your interest from your native country, and fix it in another land,—another race—"

I would have given worlds to interrupt him and exculpate myself from such a charge; but as he did not explicitly mention the name of Count Isenbourg, I feared my ready application of his hint might be liable to misinterpretation.

"Still," he continued, "I cannot suppose that the happiness, the respectability, the reputation of Lady Stratherne, have already become indifferent to your feelings. I choose to believe that, however you may despise the counsel of the friends who love and the acquaintances who admire you, you still cherish some degree of affection towards your early companion,—towards the ill-fated being whom even that protecting affection will scarcely preserve from destruction."

"You alarm me!" I exclaimed, no longer intent on my own vindication,—no longer dwelling on any of his insinuations, save that which regarded Isabella. "You alarm me beyond description."

"I *wish* to do so!" was his stern reply. "Had I ventured to speak so explicitly on my arrival here, much mischief might have been spared. But tell me, madam,—if indeed I may presume to ask,—tell me whether I understood rightly in your explanation at the dinner-table with the Princesse de Montfaucon, that your friend has really abandoned her intention of pursuing her tour as far as Baden, and that in a few days you return to England?"

"Lady Stratherne has quite given up her chimerical project," said I, wishing to evade a reply as to the exact period of our departure. "It would have been impossi-

sible, indeed, for her to visit Paris according to her announcement; for a solemn promise made to my father on quitting England, limits the period of our absence. I have long been engaged to pass the remainder of the summer at the country-seat of my aunt, Lady Hereward."

"How unfortunate!" ejaculated Lord Clendennis.

"I have no inclination to think so. Accustomed to the tranquillity of a country life, I have nothing so much at heart as to escape the restless round of dissipation in which I have been involved for the last six months."

"*Nothing!* Not even the peace of mind of the unhappy Lady Stratherne?"

"I do not see how my visit to Lady Hereward is likely to influence her happiness. You must have observed that when we were in London together, my presence or absence, my advice or warning, were equally unavailing against mischievous temptations."

"Most true!" exclaimed Lord Clendennis, with a mournful air; "and even here, as her inmate—as a sacred tie upon the discretion of her conduct—how little have you been able to counteract the evil!"

"Nay!" cried I, "slight as my influence may be with Isabella, do not undervalue its extent. Do not deny me the satisfaction of believing that during our visit to the continent, my remonstrances have at least availed to wean her from one fatal propensity."

"How!" exclaimed Lord Clendennis, starting at this declaration. "Are you, then, really so blind, so credulous, so deceived, as to imagine that——? Impossible!" he cried, interrupting himself. "But I perceive and respect your motive. I see you are willing to screen the faults—*the vices*—of your friend. It is, however, too late; the whole secret of this disgraceful affair is in my hands. Yes, Lady Sophia; know that I am in Lady Stratherne's confidence as fully as yourself."

"*More* fully, if you have been informed of any recurrence to play since we quitted London. And yet I cannot believe it even on *your* asseveration! Isabella has never visited the Redoute without me; I have been scarcely separated an hour from her side during our sojourn here. She has had no opportunity, even had she inclination, to renew her fatal folly."

I was leaning on the arm of Lord Clendennis, and fancied I could perceive that mine was pressed more closely

to his side when I uttered this vindication of his favourite. He seemed trying to gain a view of my countenance, to see if it confirmed my assertion. Some moments elapsed before he spoke again; and it was in a broken voice that he at length exclaimed, "No! no! I was wrong, I was unpardonable, to imagine for a single instant that *you* could sanction scenes of such a nature. I was wrong to believe you capable—I—I—Oh! from what a weight of trouble have you relieved my mind!"

"I scarcely know in what manner," said I, secretly rejoiced that any circumstance connected with myself had power to agitate him thus. "Believe me, I had no intention of——"

"It is unnecessary, madam," interrupted my companion, "to remind me of the unimportance my feelings assume in *your* estimation. I am as fully aware as you can desire of your indifference to all I suffer,—all I apprehend. And yet—(for though perforce resigned to the misery of knowing the treasure of your affections bestowed on another, I cannot so readily submit to the mortification of seeing your fair fame injured by unguarded association with the profligate and deceitful,) yet—yet—would I presume to forewarn Lady Sophia Meredyth of the dangers which beset her path; and which even a hopeless, a *rejected* lover, cannot regard without consternation."

Involuntarily I withdrew my arm from his. I was apprehensive lest the trepidation of my frame should betray the deep emotion excited in my bosom by every word that fell from his lips.

"I see how it is!" he exclaimed, attributing this movement to resentment, "the affianced wife of Count Isenbourg will not vouchsafe even the common courtesies of society to one who has presumed to address her in the language of tenderness. She will not believe—she will not deign to believe—that the attachment she has refused to sanction is capable of suggesting other than interested views."

Each succeeding word of his communication augmented my amazement; and I now felt the necessity of summoning courage to meet the explanation of all these mysteries. "Suffer me at least to undeceive you respecting *one* part of your statement," I replied. "However, or by whomsoever, you may have been led into error, I have a right to declare, that, so far from being betrothed to Count

Isenbourg, so far from feeling inclined to favour his addresses, I have seen him for the last time. He has already quitted Spa; and nothing can be more improbable than that we should ever meet again."

"Sophia!" faltered Lord Clendennis in a concentrated voice.

"May I now inquire," I persisted, "by whom you were induced to form so groundless an opinion?"

"By your friend,—your bosom friend! Lady Stratherne herself explained to me in the clearest and most decided terms the hopelessness of my suit, and your inclination in Isenbourg's favour."

"On any assurance but your own," said I, "I should at once discredit and deny this assertion. I cannot think *you* would deceive me. But amid all the horror—the amazement—that Isabella's double-dealing excites in my mind, I own myself at a loss to guess the motives of her treachery. You will believe me, I am persuaded, when I give you my word of honour that I now learn for the first time the flattering nature of your sentiments towards me, and that——"

"Sophia, Sophia!" interrupted Clendennis, seizing my hand, and forcibly replacing within his own the arm I had previously withdrawn. "Proceed not till you have explained yourself on that *one* point. You have alluded kindly to my presumptuous pretensions; suffer me to believe that your words were not dictated by mere courtesy. Tell me,—satisfy me,—that for whatever purpose you may have been left ignorant of my proposals, you do not wholly reject them;—that Lady Stratherne has deceived me,—that—Sophia, you smile—you permit me to detain this precious hand!—I am answered; oh! how enchantingly answered.—Sophia, you will one day be mine; you will one day render me the happiest, the most envied of mortals."

I scarcely know which of the two was the more deeply gratified by this wholly unexpected elucidation of our prolonged misunderstanding; and so completely were we engrossed with our own prospects of happiness, by consultations respecting the measures to be taken with my father, and the views Lord Chester was likely to entertain of our attachment, that it was some time before we recurred to Isabella's unexplained conduct. I could by no means understand in what way my marriage with Isenbourg, even had it been secured by her concealment of Clen-

dennis's intentions, was likely to forward her interests. Treacherous as she was, I was still inclined to believe she loved me; and my union with a Rhenish noble must have necessarily parted us for the remainder of our lives. Half sportively, I insinuated to my companion a suspicion that jealousy of his regard had instigated her proceedings.

"You cannot be so blind as to believe that *I* was ever an object of partiality to your friend?" inquired Clendennis. "You surely must perceive how differently her affections are engrossed?"

My thoughts glanced to Prince Ernest. Though I would not give utterance to so humiliating a suspicion, I own it struck me that an attachment between them had, perhaps, prompted Isabella's selfish project of fixing my destinies in a country which might hereafter become her own.

"It cannot be doubted," resumed Lord Clendennis, profiting by my disinclination to reply, "that your friend is truly and passionately attached to her husband. Never, indeed, was union plighted under happier auspices than theirs! But very early in their marriage Lady Stratherne's fatal propensity became apparent. It was forgiven:—what will not the enthusiasm of love forgive? The error was repeated—aggravated;—again forgiven! After reiterated promises of amendment,—after the most solemn engagements to renounce the gaming-table,—the extent of her losses once more revealed her disgrace, and the infraction of her word. Even on that occasion, Lord Stratherne did not refuse to free her from her humiliating embarrassments. But she was amply punished; for he withdrew his respect from the mother of his children, his tenderness from the wife of his bosom."

I shuddered! Erring as she was, I could not but sympathize with her, under such a sentence of retribution.

"Connected with Stratherne by terms of the most familiar friendship," continued Clendennis, "I became a witness to many domestic scenes, the details of which have been hitherto reserved for my secret sorrow and sympathy. To *you*, dearest Sophia! I am henceforward privileged to divulge every thought of my mind;—from *you*, Heaven be thanked! I have no farther concealments."

"And you imagine she really *loves* the husband whose happiness and comforts she would sacrifice to the selfish indulgence of this detestable pursuit?"

"I do!—I am persuaded that Stratherne possesses her

whole affection:—nay, that by a judicious mode of management, he might have weaned her from her fatal infatuation. It was his duty to break through all other engagements—to renounce all other responsibilities;—and, by restricting Lady Stratherne to a mode of life tending to the development of her better qualities, restore her to him and to herself."

"Lord Stratherne's public duties," I began.

"My friend is a high-minded man—of a noble and generous character," interrupted Clendennis; "but he is proud of his intellectual endowments.—Ambitious—active, aspiring,—and unwilling to tame down his views to the mediocrity of a country life, he has suffered his wife to pursue, unchecked, her course of vice and folly in those congenial circles where the seeds of error were originally sown. If not *wholly*, he is much to blame."

"We may pardon an error so heavily expiated."

"Heavily, indeed! Envied and courted as they are, Stratherne and his wife are overwhelmed with remorse and affliction. I can figure to myself no position more terrible than that of a man unable to estrange his affections from a woman who has proved herself undeserving of them."

"I cannot give my faith to the existence of affection under such circumstances. With *me*, it is necessary to respect the object of my attachment."

"Long may you preserve that feeling! Long, very long may it be, before I give you cause to examine into your own heart in such an alternative."

"But at present you have afforded me no clew to the labyrinth in which I find myself involved?" said I, shrinking under the ardour of his glances.

"Would that I could clear up the mystery without involving your friend in the utter darkness of the clouds her treachery has raised! It is necessary, however, dearest Sophia, that you should be fully undeceived; and grievous as it is to alienate from poor Lady Stratherne the regard of the only woman whose friendship she values, I must have no reserve with my betrothed wife!"

"You alarm me by this solemn preamble."

"Nay, I have little to imply and nothing to relate beyond what you already guess. I have only to accuse her of a heavy pecuniary obligation to myself; granted on my part, in order to screen her from such indignation on the

part of her husband, as I feared must produce a definitive separation between them; and solicited on hers, with a promise of the most sacred nature never again to approach the gaming-table;—a promise broken almost as soon as ratified. It is this obligation which has rankled in her heart. She dreaded that you should learn, as you are now learning, in the confidence of mutual explanations, the worthlessness of her word of honour, the degraded position of your friend,——"

"I see it all, I see it clearly!" I exclaimed. "I, too, and on similar temptations, have assisted to extricate her from embarrassment. But is there any comparison between the flagrancy of her addiction to play, and that of practising upon us with mutual deceptions? Never can I forget or forgive the uneasy hours you have been—we have *both* been—condemned to pass! Thank Heaven, the period of quitting her has arrived; for it will be no easy task to repress my indignation in Isabella's presence, when I remember the false hopes her duplicity has induced Monsieur d'Isenbourg to cherish, and the insults offered to yourself."

"Her second error is the result of the first. There never was a person beset by the pressing difficulties arising from the emergencies of deep play, who would not extricate himself at the sacrifice of every good principle, every honourable feeling. Lady Stratherne was once a woman of integrity, a woman of an unsullied mind. See to what straits she has reduced herself by ceding to the influence of this one besetting sin."

It was now agreed between us that Isabella having forfeited all claim to our confidence,—and, lest her interference should again produce dissension or misunderstanding,—our engagement should be kept scrupulously secret till sanctioned by the consent of my father. Her intended departure, mean while, was of necessity made known to my accepted lover, my future husband, who promised to loiter at Spa some days after our departure, then proceed to England, and tender to Lord Chester those formal proposals, which could not but prove acceptable. Our marriage would probably be solemnized in the course of the autumn.

"I own," said I, as we retraced our steps towards the Castle, slowly ascending those mazy walks which we had threaded unconsciously in the deep interest of our conver-

sation; "I own I wish this journey were accomplished. I long to be at home; I dread to be alone with Isabella; and above all I fear the interference and insolence of that odious Rittersfield."

"Then why not suffer me to follow you and become your protector, in case of his joining you on the road? Do you apprehend that Lady Stratherne wishes him to bear her company?"

"On the contrary, I suspect that this precipitate departure arises solely from anxiety to avoid his assiduities."

"His assiduities!"

"What else can she have to fear from him? Her trepidation at the mere sound of his voice convinces me that she regards him with horror."

"He may, perhaps, be a less forbearing *creditor* than Isenbourg, or myself, or her friend Lady Sophia Meredyth. Rittersfield is capable of abusing his power, and presuming upon his advantage as the confidant of her shameful secrets."

"No, no! It is now some years since they met at Paris; and I do not believe she has staked five guineas since her arrival at Spa."

"Sophia?"

"I admit that it is yet premature to pronounce upon her reformation; yet even under all the indignation of my recent discoveries, I must acknowledge my hope that Isabella has weaned herself from her passion for play."

"Can it be possible that you have been so completely deceived! Can it be possible you are still ignorant that during the last five weeks Lady Stratherne has been losing hundreds,—thousands!"

"Nay!" I exclaimed, laughing at his earnestness. "This exaggeration confutes itself. I have, indeed, seen her bet,—have carefully watched her proceedings; and venture to assure you that your imputations are unjust."

"You relieve my mind from its only remaining shadow of uneasiness," cried Lord Clendennis; "*not* by exonerating your friend, *that* unfortunately is impossible; but by proving to me that you were not permitted to share those orgies, of which Lady Stratherne was the presiding deity, and Rittersfield, Montfaucon, Luxembourg, Lord Frederick, Sir Charles, and Isenbourg, the eager votaries."

"*Orgies?*"

"Yes, Sophia! Every night when you suppose Lady Stratherne retired like yourself to rest, every night after

your return from the Redoute, a private bank is held at the hotel under her auspices. My notorious aversion from such pursuits, secures me even from an invitation to join the party. But I had no reason to believe *you* excluded from the secret; and her repeated assertion of your attachment to Count Isenbourg, has redoubled my disgust against proceedings which, to my jealous eyes, seemed to secure your meeting under circumstances so degrading to yourself."

"To what vile,—what injurious suspicions has Isabella exposed me!" I exclaimed, almost weeping with vexation. But while Clendennis, grieved to have distressed me, took my hand in his, and was expostulating in the tenderest manner with my tears, we were startled by the laughter of Madame de Montfaucon. The twilight, which had begun to darken the plantations, scarcely enabled us to discover her, seated beside Count d'Oultremont on the fallen trunk of a tree which lay beside the path.

"*Garde a vous!*" she cried, in the shrill tone of a sentinel on duty.

"What have I to apprehend?" said I, stopping short, and compelled to make some answer.

"You, *ma princesse?* Nothing, it is to be hoped. You, we trust, are equally *sans peur et sans reproche.* It was to my lord I ventured to address a word of warning, lest the spirit of Monsieur d'Isenbourg should make its way from the bottom of the Rhine (where we are to suppose his body is now lying) to cry 'Beware!' and fright us from our propriety."

"Have any bad tidings reached you of the Count?" demanded poor d'Oultremont with his usual air of honest sympathy.

"You must inquire of Miladi Stratherne," said the Princess, with a sneer. "She has been wandering up and down this hour past, beating the bushes for Lady Sophia; and unless she had some very interesting intelligence to communicate, why be so much alarmed by the circumstance of a young lady and a young gentleman losing themselves in a wood?"

We were fortunately spared her farther insinuations. A messenger now appeared, announcing that the fireworks were about to begin. With what altered feelings did I return to the party!—How very differently had I already learned to regard the Prince of Bentheim's fête, and the ruins of the Castle of Franchimont!

CHAPTER VI.

Now the distempered mind
Has lost that concord of harmonious powers
Which forms the soul of happiness. Abroad,
Convulsive anger storms at large; or pale
And silent, settles into fell revenge.
Then dark disgust, and hatred, ending with
Coward deceit and ruffian violence. THOMSON.

It was after a tedious day's journey that Lady Stratherne and myself alighted, on the following evening, in the court-yard of the Hotel d'Harscamp at Namur. Having quitted Spa before daybreak, the friends with whom we parted the preceding night at Franchimont remained ignorant of our departure till many hours after we were on our road to Liège; and the cloud that overhung the spirits of Isabella at the moment of setting off having gradually disappeared as we gained ground on our journey, I was soon convinced that Clendennis's opinion was correct, and that her inducement for this mysterious mode of departure arose solely from the nature of her obligations towards Prince Ernest of Rittersfield.

Till we reached Liège, indeed, nothing could be more evident than the perturbation of her mind. Every unusual noise on the road, every obstacle, every passenger, seemed to excite her alarm;—but, at length, when we had passed the forges of M. M. Coquerel, and attained unmolested the little fortress of Huy, her spirits rose to a pitch of hilarity extremely annoying to my own feelings. I was not only depressed by the circumstance of my recent parting from Lord Clendennis, but too much irritated against Lady Stratherne by all that had recently transpired, to sympathize with her mirth. At one moment she rallied me concerning Isenbourg; the next, she strove to pique me into reply by repeating some of the bitter pleasantries of the Princesse de Montfaucon. But it would not do. The laugh died unechoed on her lips; and, at length, wearied by previous agitation, or exhausted by her over-exertion, she fell asleep and left me to my meditations.

It was a lovely evening;—still and calm, and freshened by a rising dew that brought forth a thousand delicious odours from the *lust gartens*, which occasionally inter-

vened between the river-side and the road,—each decorated with the gaudy smoking pavilion so dear to the habits of the Austrian Netherlands. The Meuse lay like a mirror below, with the tall shadows of the poplars on its shores and islands stretching undisturbed across the unruffled surface. The splash of oars, or the harsh cry of the Walloon bargemen, alone interrupted the tranquillity of the scene; and nothing could be more composing to my spirits than this,—the first hour of solitary meditation I had enjoyed since assured of the affection of the man I had loved so long and hopelessly! I refrained, however, from dwelling on the past; it was too much connected with the misdoings of my friend. I chose to think only of the future, the bright, unsullied, happy, hopeful future. I saw nothing before me but joy, and peace, and love; and reclining in a corner of the carriage, gave myself up to the blessedness of grateful contentment.

A sudden scream from my companion interrupted the current of my contemplations. Starting up and seizing my arm with a convulsive grasp, she suddenly buried her face in my shoulder. When her forehead touched my cheek, as I strove to evade her embrace, I perceived that it was covered with a death-like dew; while her bosom sobbed spasmodically in the violence of her agitation.

"What is the matter, Isabella?" I whispered with all the calmness I could assume.

"Oh! nothing—nothing! I have been dreaming; I thought he was come,—I fancied he was here!"

"Who?—Lord Stratherne?"

"No—no—no! Prince Ernest! I am sure I heard his voice—How dreadful!"

"Is there any thing very alarming in the aspect of a man whose society you have been seeking for so many weeks past?"

"*I* seek *his* society?" she repeated with shuddering emphasis. "I would as soon bury myself in one of those ardent furnaces we saw this morning pouring out their flames at Liège! But no matter—don't let us talk of it—the spell is over!—Surely the terrors of our dreams are sent as foreshowings of the anguish of a disembodied spirit in the day of its curse! The *day?*—the eternity!"

She covered her forehead with her hands, and gnashed her teeth in bitterness;—then suddenly exclaimed, "Sophy, Sophy!—you who witness all my follies, all my

blasphemies,—when you hear me deride the opinions of the rigidly righteous, do not listen to me, child; or listen to me only that, like the devils, you may believe and tremble!—Listen to me, that you may turn from the sinful tumult of my soul to the tranquillity of yonder landscape, and know how heavenly is the peace of innocence, how awful the agony of guilt.—Listen to me, that when I am gone, you may have mercy on my girls, and train them in a better path.—*I* shall not live to profit them either by precept or warning; but you, Sophia, *you* must surround them with harsher barriers than ever were raised around *my* path. It is not enough to love God—no! it *is* not enough;—that feeling is spontaneous in every uncorrupted heart.—Teach them to *fear* him;—for in that feeling is the beginning of wisdom. Where am I wandering!—What—what—Ha!—ha!—ha! Sophy! child!—Why do you tremble?—See you not that I am still dreaming?"

Fortunately we were already within sight of the fortress of Namur; and could discern its lofty towers overlooking the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse, as they stood defined against the gray sky of the evening twilight. It was late when we took possession of our apartments in the hotel; but as supper was not yet ready, we agreed to refresh ourselves by a few turns in an arcade or covered corridor, into which they opened. On one side it formed a sort of terrace overlooking the garden; the balustrade of which was ornamented with vases of flowering shrubs, affording a far more agreeable retreat than the dark dingy chambers, with their old-fashioned tapestry and sepulchral-looking stoves.

"What a beautiful night!" I exclaimed, as we slowly paraded the terrace, gazing upon the sky now bright with starlight, and mild with the balminess of summer.

"Well! after all,—even adversity has its advantages," said Isabella, recovering her usual tone of levity, now that we were alone and safe. "Care, I thank it, has taught me more than one useful lesson. For instance;—I never before found myself compelled to pass a night in this dreary comfortless inn, without grumbling from the very moment I entered the court-yard;—and now, thanks to the joy of escaping from Spa with its thousand and one horrors, I am inclined to fancy the Hotel d'Harscamp more charming than the palace of Aladdin."

"You forget that I still wait your pleasure to learn the motive of this sudden detestation of a place sought of your own free will, and——"

"No you do *not!*—Blind as you are, Sophy, blinded by the veil of an engrossing passion—(do not start and play the heroine, I have long seen through that transparent bosom of yours) you are not half so much in the dark as you pretend. You cannot but be aware that for weeks past I have been the prey of a fiend who has been eating into my soul and deriding its torments."

"Prince Ernest," said I, half interrogatively.

"Do not name him!—Let me escape a sound as well as a sight which has initiated me into the deepest mysteries of human suffering. Sophy!" she continued, in a low voice, suddenly grasping my arm; "did you but know what it is to me to be rid of that wretch,—did you but know what it is to me to be *here*, with the certainty he is *there*,—to feel that leagues and leagues are between us——"

She started!—a dark figure stood beside us—a stranger, who had emerged unobserved from another chamber opening into the arcade. No! *not* a stranger,—that hope was premature;—it was indeed Prince Ernest of Rittersfield's sneering laugh which mingled with his ironical inquiries after our health, after so precipitate a journey. Isabella did not shriek,—did not start,—did not utter a syllable. She was overwhelmed with horror and despair: and it was I who found courage to inquire of the intruder whether he had arrived shortly after ourselves.

"*After* you?" said he, in the most insultingly obsequious manner. "And can you imagine, Lady Sophia, that I would leave to any other man the gratification of being your *avant-courier?* Do you suppose that I,—like the phlegmatic Clendennis,—would content myself with bidding the postillions be careful, and the lackeys vigilant? No, no,—fair ladies!—no sooner were *your* plans of departure devised (and, faith, they did justice to the ingenuity of your sex,) than mine were formed on the selfsame chart. I only took care to be beforehand with two fugitive dames who might possibly lack my protection; and, on quitting the *Ritterfest* of Franchimont, instantly commenced my journey hither. I trust you will not withhold your acknowledgments from my diligence and devotion."

Never shall I forget the triumphant scorn that rang in

his voice as he spoke. It was too dark to discern his countenance; but I could *feel* the malicious exultation of the looks he fixed upon us; and shuddered under their expression.

But my pride came to my assistance. I determined not to quail so meanly before the insolent bravado of one capable of stooping to the intimidation of a woman.

"I must first learn that we have occasion to be indebted to your services," said I, gravely. "You are well aware, that had Lady Stratherne deemed the protection of her servants insufficient, she had countrymen of her own at Spa, who would neither have permitted her to depart unattended, nor to become a sufferer from the insults of strangers."

"Well expressed—still better insinuated!" cried Prince Ernest, with a malicious laugh. Your ladyship seems disposed to lose no time in appropriating the championship of Lord Clendennis, and reducing to practice the Quixotism of Franchimont. But fear nothing, madam! Isenbourg is gone quietly home to the cobwebs of his old hall, without the slightest ambition to break either a lance or his lordship's head in your behoof. The days of chivalry are over."

As we passed the window of our apartment, it was some comfort to notice that the servants were already busy in arranging the supper-table;—I invited Isabella to go in, and, apparently stricken dumb with despair, she prepared to accompany me.

"And do you not extend your courtesy to *me?*" inquired Prince Ernest, ironically; "to *me*, who have travelled so far to do you honour?"

Isabella pressed my arm, as if to prompt the invitation she was unable to utter.

"No," cried I, replying aloud to the signal; "after what has passed, I must decline sitting down in the Prince of Rittersfield's company. Invite him, if you please; but I shall retire to my own room."

"Sophia,—Sophia!" pleaded Lady Stratherne. "Do not irritate him;—you ruin me by this violence."

"Lady Sophia Meredyth has nothing to fear from my intrusion, or my reprehension," was his bitter reply. "I leave to the dupe Clendennis the charming but arduous task of taming down these little feminine virulences. *My* business, madam, is with *you*," he continued, addressing himself to Isabella. "And as it is impossible to divine

at what hour such active travellers may think fit to take the road to-morrow, I am compelled to request a private audience this night,—this very night."

"Do not grant it, Isabella," said I, firmly. "He can have no right to demand, nor any good purpose in desiring it."

"Sophy—Sophy!" again faltered my friend, in a pleading voice.

"As Lady Stratherne pleases!" cried Rittersfield, scornfully. "The privacy I sought was a concession of mercy. It depends on herself that our interview should take place here, or in presence of Lord Stratherne, or the whole Court of St. James's;—to me the time and place are alike indifferent."

He amused himself with his snuff-box, to mark the *insouciance* with which he uttered this defiance, while sauntering negligently by our side.

"You must perceive," murmured Isabella, in a low voice, and pointing to our apartment, which was full of the servants of the hotel, "that I cannot receive you there."

"Certainly not!" replied Rittersfield, throwing open the door of his own chamber, which was untenanted, and dimly lighted by two solitary candles. "Here, however, we may talk and listen undisturbed. Ten minutes will suffice for the explanation of your ladyship's intentions and my own."

"Do not,—*pray* do not go with him, Isabella," I exclaimed, arresting her on the threshold of the door.

"I *must!*" she replied in an emphatic whisper, while she unclasped my arm. "Remain here, Sophy,—remain here; I will return in a few minutes."

"No! you shall not be with him alone," cried I, eagerly. "You have every thing to fear from that man."

A hollow laugh from Rittersfield marked his contempt of my terrors. "Nay, sweet lady!" said he, in a tone of affected softness still more frightful than his rage, "ogres and *loup-garoux* are as rare in these our times as knight-errants and squires of dames. Lady Stratherne grants me the honour of her company of her own free will, and for her own sole advantage;—her peril lies in the refusal."

Again Isabella laid her commands upon me not to stir, nor interfere with her proceedings; and, pausing a single moment, as if for the recovery of her self-possession, she followed Prince Ernest into his chamber. The moment

she entered, he carefully drew behind him the heavy curtains of Utrecht velvet, which screened the chamber within from my observation.

CHAPTER VII.

> In the midst
> Of laughter, her compunctions are sincere,
> And she abhors the jest by which she shines;
> Remorse begets reform.
>
> COWPER'S TASK.

NOTWITHSTANDING all this mystery, I did not for a moment delude myself by the notion that Lady Stratherne had any thing to apprehend from her insolent favourite, beyond the peremptory settlement of some pecuniary obligation; I saw that it was insult, not injury she dreaded. Unwilling to pry into a secret likely to involve her in farther shame, I stole away from the window to the opposite balustrade; and, leaning against one of its stone vases, indulged in a bitter flood of tears. The consciousness of Isabella's humiliation, of my own isolation, of Clendennis's absence, pressed heavily on my spirits; and grievously, indeed, did I long for the hour of my return to England.

Five minutes, ten, a quarter of an hour elapsed,—and Lady Stratherne did not make her appearance. At length growing uneasy at her delay, I was about to enter the chamber, when, to my great surprise, Prince Ernest coolly stepped forth, with his hat on his head, and after uttering an ironical compliment of adieu, and an inquiry whether I had any commands for Spa, which place he should reach before morning, advised me to go and tender my services to my friend. "Trust me, I shall be careful to tranquillize any surmises my sudden departure may have excited in the mind of my Lord Clendennis," said he with a sneer, "by informing him that I was not even admitted to the honour of supping in your ladyship's company."

He disappeared along the dark arcade, while I hastened into the room he had quitted; nor did it surprise me to find Isabella seated beside the table, with her face hidden on her arms, that lay outstretched before her. She looked up as I approached; and I saw that her cheeks were pale as marble, her lips livid, her eyes swollen. She had even

found it necessary to maintain her courage during the interview, by recourse to her customary mode of excitement; for the dressing-case, to which she directed my attention two nights before, had been sent for, and was still on the table.

"Is he gone?" she murmured in a scarcely audible whisper, as I advanced to take one of her deathlike hands.

"Quite gone; you have nothing more to fear."

"No!" she wildly reiterated, "I *have* nothing more to fear. It is all over!"

"Come then to your own room, my dear Isabella; lie down, and try to take some rest."

"Lie down and *die!*" frantically rejoined my friend. "Oh! that I had, indeed, courage to die," she exclaimed, wringing her hands.

"Prince Ernest has quitted the house," said I, unable to devise any means of subduing her agitation. "He is already on his road to Spa: you will see and hear of him no more. Think, therefore, only of Lord Stratherne,—of your children,—of the joy of your welcome home."

But to all my exhortations, she replied by gestures expressive of despair, or groans, which seemed to spring from the unutterable anguish of her heart; till at length I myself was compelled to suggest farther recourse to the fatal remedy which alone seemed capable of assuaging her sufferings. Instead of appearing at the supper table, I passed the remainder of the evening and the greater part of the night by her bed-side; already anticipating with dismay that, instead of proceeding on our journey, the indisposition of Lady Stratherne would detain us at Namur for some days to come. No sooner did I find the torpor, which with *her* habitually supplied the place of sleep, begin to steal over her senses, than I gave way to the effects of the fatigues and anxieties I had undergone, and retired to rest. But, alas! my slumbers already bore witness to my participation in her inquietudes. I was assailed by a thousand horrible visions and painful perplexities. Wherever I turned, Rittersfield was again beside me: not in a menacing attitude, but in that far more frightful mood of sneering irony, which had power to suspend the very current of my blood. For the first time, night was arrayed in a thousand terrors to my soul. Now, I seemed to stumble over the dead body of Isabella; and now, it was alternately Lord Stratherne and Clendennis, whom I found stretched breathless at my feet.

From these fearful visions, I was roused by the sudden admission of the mid-day sun into my chamber; and what was my amazement on perceiving that Lady Stratherne, equipped for our journey, had drawn aside my curtains with her own hand! Accustomed as I was to her rapid transitions of health, humour, and sentiment, I own I was utterly confounded to observe that she was in one of her happiest moods,—that all trace of her illness had disappeared,—that the gay coquette was as flighty and fearless as ever. Of all my dreams this surely was the strangest!

"Reveillez vous, belle endormie!"

cried, or rather sang Isabella, gaily lending her assistance at my toilet. "I cannot allow you a quarter of a minute longer for repose, or we shall hardly reach Brussels in time for the Opera. Be quick, and drink your coffee while Mademoiselle Clarice arranges your hair."

I obeyed without reply; nay! so much was I surprised and shocked by the unbecoming frivolity of her demeanour, that on re-entering the travelling-carriage I drew out a book, and, instead of promoting conversation with Lady Stratherne, left her to chew the cud of her meditations. Now and then she interrupted my studies by observations on the speed of our journey, or the state of the roads; but, subdued by my air of gravity, she ventured on no topic connected with our sojourn at Spa, or her interview with Rittersfield.

A courier had preceded us to secure apartments in the Hotel Bellevue; and it was Isabella's intention to visit the opera incog. (probably with the view of avoiding the prolongation of our trying tête-à-tête,) and depart at an early hour on the morrow for Lille and Calais, our place of embarkation for England. But scarcely had we alighted, when a letter from Lady J——, the wife of the British Ambassador, was placed in her hands, stating that the news of our expected arrival had reached the Archduchess, who was then at the palace of Lacken, the summer residence of the court,—where our presence was especially commanded at a fête to be given that evening in honour of some Russian Grand-duke. Without pausing even to taste refreshments, Lady Stratherne instantly ordered fresh horses to be put to the carriage, and signified the necessity of proceeding forthwith on her journey.

"Will it be possible to evade, without disrespect, the invitation of Madame la Gouvernante?" said I. "Re-

member that on quitting Spa you promised to visit her at Lacken."

"She will not miss us in the crowd; and even Archduchesses must sometimes meet with disappointments. I shall leave a letter for Lady J——, charging her with my personal apologies, and an assurance that the dangerous illness of one of my children forbids me to waste an hour on my way to England. Sad to say, my dear Sophy, we must confirm this statement by travelling all night; or, at least, till we pass the frontier."

"But to what purpose all these falsehoods—all this precipitancy?"

"No matter, no matter. It is wholly—utterly—out of the question to go to Lacken."

"Are you apprehensive of a second encounter with Rittersfield?"

"No!—by this time he is half way back to Paris."

"Then, at least, take pity on your fatigues and my own. Although we do not join the Archduchess's fête, pray let us enjoy a night's rest."

"I promise you to sleep at Enghien—Ath—where you will; only let us avoid all danger of being dragged to this unlucky ball."

"I am weary beyond description," said I, conceiving no motive for her restlessness but that of caprice, "and should really be glad to remain here till morning."

"Sophia!" cried Isabella, suddenly rushing towards me with clasped and outstretched hands, "if you *love* me, do not oppose my plans. I must—I *must* quit Brussels. The horses are waiting,—I have left a note to be delivered to the Ambassadress after our departure. Dearest Sophy, take pity on me, and let us away!"

How could I resist this fervent appeal?—I had no choice but to accompany her; nor would she hear of pausing for the night till we reached Tournay,—when I insisted on the respite of a few hours.

Yet, notwithstanding all this haste, no sooner did we arrive at Calais, than her anxiety to get to England seemed to subside. She, who had been accustomed from her childhood to the sea, and was in the habit of cruising half the summer in Lord Stratherne's yacht, now affected the most absurd apprehensions concerning the state of the weather, in order to procrastinate our voyage;—till, at length, tired out by her caprices, I could no longer refrain from expostulation.

"I know I am inconsistent,—vexatious,—puerile—erring,—*mad!*" said she, in reply, and her eyes were filled with tears while she spoke; "but bear with me yet a little longer, Sophy; bear with me yet a while longer, love; and your task of endurance will bring its own reward. The time may come when you will learn to wonder less that the friend of your youth was flighty and inconsiderate of your comfort, than that she retained sufficient fortitude to brave the common accidents of life,—sufficient courage to look upon yonder waves without plunging headlong into the abyss."

"Do not talk in this heinous manner," I cried, accepting the embraces she offered, "and I will bear with any thing,—will forgive every thing. A wife and the mother of children is unpardonable to indulge in such despondency."

You will readily believe with what delight I set foot on English ground! Yet with double reason to rejoice in the termination of my visit to Isabella and the happy prospects of my engagement with Clendennis, I could not suffer my transport to become apparent during our progress from Dover to London, for every minute—every mile—the distress of my companion increased. A stranger might have supposed her returning to some oppressive task, some bitter punishment, instead of to the arms of an honourable husband, and the endearments of the lovely children whose affection would have sufficed to form the happiness of any other woman. Indignant as I was, I could not listen to her heavy sighs without sympathy, or mark the deep gloom upon her brow without consternation.

And yet I had not courage to interrogate her touching the immediate motive of her despondency! Having revealed to me without remorse so many details of past misconduct, I could not help fearing that something worse than all the rest remained untold: I dared not even form a conjecture concerning the source of her uneasiness. I felt, however, that on one point it behooved me to be candid with herself, lest she should learn from others—from strangers—the nature of my new engagements; and as we approached the metropolis, I mingled with my formal thanks (and necessarily they were both formal and cold) for her kindness during our visit to the continent, a declaration that proposals for my hand were about to be tendered by Clendennis to my father.

"I know it, Sophy—I know it all," was her mournful

reply, "and sincerely thank Heaven that my folly and wickedness have not originated the mischief they might have caused, had *you* been less firm, or Clendennis less clear-sighted. It is well that one of our party returns to England with a heart unbroken, a mind unseared by guilt. But, alas! what have I to offer in extenuation of the treachery of which I stand convicted in your eyes?—I *did* strive to circumvent the mutual attachment I foresaw between you:—I *did* attempt to entangle you in a marriage with another. But you were not sufficiently frank with me, Sophia! Circumstanced as we were together, you should not have disguised from me the preference of your heart. It was your own want of candour which provoked me to prolong your uneasiness, and that of poor Count Isenbourg."

"But why—tell me, I beseech you, Isabella—why were you inclined to promote misunderstanding between Clendennis and myself?"

"The task of confession is too humiliating;—spare me some portion of its bitterness!"

"Nay, then,—I will inquire no farther."

"It is too late!—I feel that your esteem for me is irretrievable; and it will not augment your disgust to learn how much I dreaded to forfeit the regard of the only man, the only woman, whose friendship I ever wished to conciliate. I foresaw that in the unlimited confidence of unlimited love, Clendennis would acquaint you with my dishonour in incurring a pecuniary obligation to a man unconnected with me by ties of blood; and that *you*, love—you, my kind, good, gentle friend—would alienate any feeling of interest lingering towards me in the mind of your future husband, by betraying the meanness that has allowed me to encroach on your little fortune."

"Isabella, Isabella," cried I, interrupting her, "do not imagine——"

"Hush!" said Lady Stratherne, placing her hand on my lips, "not a word more on the subject now. The time for explanation is not fully come. I have confessions to make, which must precede those so heavily due to yourself. The happiness of my future life, the welfare of my immortal soul, hangs, Sophia, on a thread frailer than the slightest web floating on yonder summer atmosphere. And yet, I dare to hope! The veriest sinner, the unhappiest wretch that lives, is invited to hope.

Oh! let me but pass in safety this one ordeal,—let me but obtain forgiveness where I have sinned the deepest,—and my repentance, my reformation, the whole tenour of my future life, shall prove that the mercies of Heaven have not been bestowed in vain! To my husband—to Stratherne—to my dear husband——" her voice faltered, and the tears burst from her eyes. "God be thanked!" said she, dashing them away with her hand. "I was afraid these sources of comfort were dried up for ever. I have not wept one tear through all my sufferings—all my despair!"

Perceiving how unfit she was to be left alone, I proposed that, instead of leaving me at my father's on her way home, I should proceed with her till Lord Stratherne was in —— Street to receive her!"

"No!" she replied, when the postboys took their preconcerted way to Grosvenor Square. "This is a trial I must meet alone—unsupported."

"Farewell, Sophia!" at length murmured Isabella, imprinting a fervent kiss upon my forehead, as we reached my father's door. "Think of me as charitably as you can till we meet again; and be that moment cheered by unreserved confidence, and unreserved forgiveness.—Kiss me again, Sophy!—press me kindly by the hand!—Grant me some encouragement ere I proceed in my penance. Do not fancy you behold one of my transitory fits of penitence; or that I shall recover for the commission of farther follies. No,—I have plucked out the offending member from my bosom! Time will—but it is too late to open my heart to you now. Farewell, Sophia! you shall hear from me to-morrow. Farewell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

> Forbear to judge,—for we are sinners all;—
> Close up the curtain!
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER all my anticipations of delight at returning home, my heart was inexpressibly saddened, in crossing my father's threshold, by the mournful tone of Isabella's parting adjurations. Even after I had entered the draw-

ing-room, I half resolved to follow her to —— Street, instead of awaiting Lord Chester's arrival to our usual late dinner.

But scarcely did ten minutes elapse in that region of forms and ceremonies, before my accustomed deference to my father returned in its fullest force; and I was far too much in awe of his displeasure to venture on a step which he might construe into want of respect towards himself. And when at length he made his appearance, his mode of welcome was so much warmer than I had expected, and his demeanour so much kinder and more familiar than usual, that I soon lost sight of the Stratherne family in the interest of making known to him the position of my own affairs, and claiming his sanction to my union with Lord Clendennis. I had not till then imagined him capable of the tenderness with which he gave me his benediction, and assured me of his perfect satisfaction in the match.

We sat down to dinner tête-à-tête; and never did I see him so gracious—so conversible. Lord Chester already ceased to treat me as a child; and seemed to have decided that my engagement to become a wife sufficed to convert me into a woman. Assuming a tone of friendly confidence, he threw off all the usual reserve of his demeanour; and after having dismissed the servants at dessert, began to talk to me as volubly and explicitly as though I were the head of his party in the cabinet. I was apprehensive that his new vein of communicativeness might lead him to the chapter of Lady Stratherne, and my fears were not premature.

"I am glad to see you sitting there opposite to me again, my dear Sophia," said Lord Chester, as soon as we were alone; "not only because the place looked cheerless without you, but because my sister Hereward has been harassing me with histories about Lady Stratherne, and entreaties that I would write to hasten your return to England."

"Indeed! Has my aunt any particular motive for wishing to see me?"

"She has got some fancy into her head, that your friend is scarcely old or wise enough to be trusted with the care of you; and even protests that you have made away with a large sum of money since you have acted under her ladyship's guidance."

"And yet Lady Hereward was a strenuous promoter of my intimacy with Isabella," said I, evading a direct answer, but covered with blushes, which amounted almost to confession.

"You need not be so apprehensive of betraying the secrets of your friend," observed Lord Chester; "I am acquainted with the whole affair; and congratulate you on having conducted it with a degree of spirit and generosity worthy the name of Meredyth."

"My dear father!"

"This very morning Lord Stratherne requested permission to pay over to my bankers the sum of fifteen hundred pounds, advanced by my daughter to her thoughtless schoolfellow; with a farther entreaty that an act of such pernicious kindness might never be renewed on your part."

"You delight me beyond measure! The obligation could only have been made known to him by Isabella herself. Her letters have probably anticipated the confession she announced to me this morning: and since her husband thus generously consents to defray her debts of honour, I foresee that all misunderstanding between them will end, and their domestic happiness be at length restored."

"Not, however, without an immense sacrifice on his part. I have reason to know that Stratherne has been obliged to sell a favourite estate in order to clear off these unsatisfactory incumbrances. Our conversation of this morning produced an expansion of feeling such as I little expected from a man of his reserved disposition. He owned that Lady Stratherne had written soon after her arrival at Spa, to make known the difficulties by which she was beset previously to her departure. 'I have already encroached on my children's birthright,' said he. 'On *this* occasion—but for the last time—I will again extend my hand to save her from disgrace. My wife assures me that to the advice and example of Lady Sophia Meredyth she owes her determination to renounce her past errors; return to the bosom of her family, and assume the duties of a wife and a mother. Judge whether my obligations to your daughter are capable of repayment by the paltry sum I have placed in your hands!'—In short," continued Lord Chester, "poor Stratherne was so deeply affected in speaking of you, and anticipating the change of his domestic position, that I doubt whether Clendennis himself would have expressed himself more warmly."

"All—all my wishes are fulfilled!" cried I, exultingly. "Isabella's difficulties are at an end, and her follies on the eve of reformation; while you, my dear father, honour with your approval the choice of my heart. All my wishes are fulfilled."

"Have you no clause of reservation for the arrival of my future son-in-law?"

"Lord Clendennis will be in England by the beginning of next week."

"I almost wish, Sophy, he had followed you more closely. It would have gratified me, had the explanation between us taken place, so as to enable me to announce the event to-morrow night at Windsor."

"At Windsor?"

"Yes, my dear Sophia! this is the eleventh of August."

My looks betrayed a sad deficiency of apprehension.

"How! have you been absent long enough from London to forget that to-morrow is the Prince's birth-day?"

"It is some time since I have seen an English newspaper."

"A magnificent gala is in preparation at the Castle for the occasion; to which you would have probably been honoured with an invitation, had not the Duchess of Ancaster been unapprized of your return."

"I am happy to be spared an additional exertion just now," said I, listlessly.

"Lady Stratherne, as the wife of a cabinet minister, cannot however excuse herself from paying her respects."

"Had not Isabella's mind been too much engrossed with the interest of her own affairs to remember this unlucky birth-day, I am persuaded," said I, "that she would have loitered four and twenty hours at Calais to evade the engagement."

My father was shocked! He was too diligent a courtier to conceive how such a duty could be regarded otherwise than as a matter of jubilee. Although but lately returned from attending their Majesties on an expedition to Cheltenham, he was eager to be at his post again, and dilated in rapturous terms on the projected splendours of the fête. While I sat listening to his domestic news,—his details of the great Gainsborough's dangerous illness,—and of a singular robbery of medals, which had taken place at Devonshire House during our absence,—we were startled by the sudden entrance of my own maid, informing me

that Mademoiselle Clarice, Lady Stratherne's attendant, insisted upon seeing me. This abrupt measure was very little consonant with the dignified etiquettes of Lord Chester's establishment; and I was striving to propitiate his displeasure by a postponement of the interview, when the poor girl herself burst into the room, and with wild gestures and incoherent prayers, implored me to accompany her without one moment's delay. On hearing that Lady Stratherne herself had sent to request my presence, my father offered to ring for the carriage.

"No, no, no!" cried Clarice, almost breathless with agitation; "my lady must step into the hackney coach in which I came, or she will be too late."

Struck by the consternation of her air, I followed her implicitly without hat or cloak; leaving my father to rave over the indiscretion of such a proceeding. Five minutes sufficed to convey me from Grosvenor Square to —— Street, but not to clear up the mystery. The hysterical sobs of poor Clarice rendered every thing unintelligible, except that her lady was very ill—dying!—and that she insisted on seeing me. The word "dying" did not, however, convey to my mind the impression anticipated by my informant. I had already heard her pronounce Isabella dying, in more than one crisis of her domestic irritations.

On reaching the house, I inquired of the steward who met me at the foot of the stairs, whether any medical man had been sent for; but the old man seemed unaware that any thing was amiss in the establishment: and, following the eager invitations of Clarice, I flew up stairs to Isabella's apartments. All was still in her dressing-room,—all still in her bed-room;—but by the light of the candles burning dimly on the table, the Frenchwoman pointed with a trembling hand to the bed, and whispered that her mistress was there.

She was indeed there. On approaching nearer, I perceived that she was lying down in her clothes; and stooping to kiss her cheek, inquired what was the matter.

"I am dying, Sophia," she faltered in an inarticulate voice, as I bent over her; "I am dying!"

"No—no!" said I; "you are only faint and exhausted. Clarice—some *eau de luce!*"

"Do not deceive yourself,—do not waste one precious moment," murmured my unfortunate friend; "I am

dying, dearest Sophy—dying by my own hand—*dying of poison.*—It is too late!" murmured Isabella, sinking back as a shriek burst from my lips.

"Where, where is Lord Stratherne!" cried I, in dismay: "fly to him, Clarice; bid him come hither instantly."

"I have been twice to my lord, and he refuses to come."

"Tell him your lady is ill—in danger!"

"He will not believe me," sobbed the girl: "there has been some dispute between my lord and my lady, and he fancies this illness a pretence."

Rushing down to the drawing-room, I found Lord Stratherne sitting quietly at his writing-table; and having in a few words explained my dreadful errand—my tears and horror-struck looks bore witness to my veracity. A few moments carried him to the bed-side of his wife.

"Isabella!—Isabella!" cried he, holding the light towards her livid face; "what means all this?"

"That you are about to be delivered from the curse I have brought upon you; that the wife who has caused you so much uneasiness,—so much shame,—has consummated an act which——" She could not conclude the fatal announcement.

Lord Stratherne now rang the bell with such violence that half a dozen servants came rushing up. "Fetch advice," cried he; "fetch the nearest medical man!"

"It is too late," said the dying woman in a hollow voice. "Not all the physicians in London could save me now;—the opium I have taken would destroy a strong man. Stratherne!—it is too late;—my doom is sealed."

"Isabella!" cried her husband, frantically; "what have I done to deserve this?"

"*You?*—nothing,—nothing!—my own errors demanded retribution."

"Did I not forgive them?—have I not pardoned all—*all!* Are you not aware that the separation I announced as the consequence of any farther recurrence to the gaming-table, could only be provoked by your own deliberate acts?"

Isabella groaned heavily.

"I expressed my displeasure, it is true, that after all my concessions you should refuse to accompany me to this Windsor fête. But was the petulance arising from so trifling a dispute capable of exciting you to——— No!—no!—no!" he cried, suddenly clasping his hands to-

gether; "I will not believe it;—I cannot believe it;—it is impossible!—you have been trying to terrify me into compliance;—dearest Isabella!—you ——— oh, God!—oh, God!—that look!"—he faltered, staggering from the bed, as she turned her dying face towards him.

"Be not misled by false hopes," murmured she. "I am dying;—the cold stupor of death is stealing over me. Comfort me, Stratherne, while my soul is still susceptible of comfort. Tell me that I am pardoned;—tell me again,—draw nearer and whisper to me, my dearest, my most beloved husband,—whisper to me that by *you*, at least, I am forgiven."

"Isabella—Isabella!"—was all poor Stratherne could utter; while I supported on my bosom the heavy head of my unhappy friend.

"Had I presumed to live, that word could never have gladdened my ears: for I had signed my own sentence,—I had condemned myself to eternal alienation from you. Yes! Henry;—in defiance of my vows,—my promises,—in defiance of your generous forbearance,—I *have* played again;—played *since* you received the letter containing the confession of my folly—the assurance of my penitence;—played till I was indebted in the sum of many thousands,—played till I learned to crouch before a ruffian. *He* had no pity on me! No; it was not money he sought of the wretch he had made his victim."

"Great Heaven,—what new horrors await me!" ejaculated Stratherne, concealing his face in the draperies of the bed.

"But though my inconsiderate folly was the means of exposing me to a declaration of his insulting passion, I thank God who gave me courage to defy his threats—to defeat his projects."

"Prince Ernest,—that ruffian!" involuntarily escaped my lips.

"That ruffian!" reiterated the sufferer. "Ah, Sophia!—little did I imagine when poor Clendennis first warned me against my intimacy with Rittersfield, with what designs the plotter was ministering to my fatal propensity; and little did *you* imagine the influence that fatal interview at Namur was to hold over the destinies of your friend. Infuriated by the scorn with which I repelled his vile addresses, he demanded the instant payment of my debt;—threatened to precede me to London,

reveal all to my husband,—and after compelling the immediate satisfaction of his claim, provoke him with a mortal defiance. I had but one way of evading all these horrors."

Lord Stratherne seized her passive hand, and fixed his glaring eyes upon her face.

"Taunted into madness, I surrendered my diamonds as a pledge of payment. Yes! Stratherne; surrendered your family inheritance—the sacred gift deposited in my hands on our marriage day."

"Dross,—mere dross!—think not of it; speak of it no more," cried her husband, relieved from his worst apprehensions.

"I knew that the extent of my losses at Spa, in coming to your knowledge, must seal my destiny," faltered Isabella; "but I had still hopes of recovering the casket. I had still hopes that my father—my own family,—compassionating the terrible destiny by which I was menaced, would enable me to liquidate the debt and regain the jewels. Alas, alas!"

"Why not confide in me, why not reveal the whole to your friend?"—said I.

"I had not a moment for deliberation; and the remorse arising from many a year of error harassed my mind to madness. Stratherne would not hear of my absenting myself from the royal fête; to appear there without those miserable diamonds would have provoked inquiries and a general elucidation.—No! I have done rightly!" she exclaimed, rallying her strength and speaking in a frantic tone. "I could *not* have borne to hear your voice pronounce my doom. Henry! thank me, thank me, for sparing you the crime of murder; thank me for sparing you the sin of destroying your miserable, your guilty wife!"

Lord Stratherne could not speak, but raising her from the pillow clasped her fervently in his arms.

"Do not make me repent the deed!" faltered Isabella, laying his hand upon her sinking heart; "do not—do not make me cling anew to life! For years past I have made it a burden to me. Oh! that they could be now retrieved."

At this moment two surgeons from the neighbourhood were ushered into the room; but after listening to her acknowledgments, and surveying the awful symptoms al-

ready apparent, they did not hesitate to acknowledge the insufficiency of their art. Antidotes were administered indeed; but they avowed their opinion that a fatal result was now irremediable.

It appeared, however, that had Lord Stratherne attended the first summons despatched to him by his wife, there might have been time to save her; and at this suggestion his reason almost forsook him. His self-upbraidings were terrible to hear.

"Hush, dearest Henry, hush!" cried the dying criminal. "Disturb not my last moments. Be gentle with me as you have ever been;—preserve your fortitude as you have still preserved it!—Sophia, comfort him!—and when I am gone, plead for me; say what you can in extenuation of my fault. Sophia! bring me my children; let me at least bequeath my poor unhappy girls to the affection of their father."

"No, no!" I exclaimed, struggling with my tears; "do not impede by fruitless agitation the operation of the remedies you have taken. Do not ask to see them;—they are asleep.—This dreadful scene would produce an ineffaceable impression on their young hearts."

"Then fetch them hither, Clarice! Be it my last duty to teach them the only lesson in my power to bestow. My poor, poor girls!"

Lord Stratherne was no longer capable of interference. He was totally unnerved and speechless; and when the two children, snatched in their night-clothes from their little pillows, were brought into the room, and placed, sobbing and terrified, on their mother's bosom, he was not even conscious of their presence.

"Mary, my child,—my first born,—my own blessed child!" faltered Isabella; "do you know me?"

The trembling babe sobbed with terror.

"Georgiana! do not hide your face from me; look at me, darling, that you may never forget the dying looks of your mother!"

"Mamma, mamma! do not talk so,—do not look so pale,—do not kiss me thus!" exclaimed the child.

"I am about to leave you for ever, my poor forsaken children!" said Lady Stratherne; "and when I am gone, Mary, you must give all your love and reverence to your father and Lady Sophia; and some day, when you are a woman, they will teach you the meaning of all you see

to-night. My children, my dear girls, turn to the Word of God, and obey it, that you may never fall into the errors of your miserable mother!"

Her voice was broken by hysteric sobs; and it was a dreadful task to remove the clinging arms of the poor babes from her farewell embrace. They had so looked forward to their mother's return;—and she was come at last, and this was the end of all! Still more dreadful was the duty of assuaging the sufferings of the expiring sinner,—of wrestling with the struggles of death. Even after the power of speech was denied, I saw that she retained her perfect consciousness; I saw—oh! that I had never seen, or could forget—the look of anguish, of despondency, of horrible, eternal despair, that glared from the eyes of the self-murderer, when the grasp of death came strong upon her heart. I saw her struggle with the enemy,—shrink as from the approach of something invisible to *me!* I saw her breathe her last sigh. I saw the senseless clay lie cold and stiff before me. I heard the frantic shriek of Stratherne,—the sobs of her attendants. I watched by those senseless remains,—by the plumed bier,—till the hearse bore her from my eyes. No, no! it were too much to describe the scene. It were too much to speak of that widowed man—of those helpless, motherless children! You can no longer wonder at the sadness with which you saw me contemplate that fatal, fatal chamber.

For forty years I was a happy and beloved wife; but not even the tenderness of Clendennis and our children could efface the grievous impression left upon my heart by the life of the female gamester—the *death-bed of Isabella!*

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THE END.

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